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Employment Conditions of Chinese Migrant Workers in the East Midlands

A Pilot Study in a Context of Economic Recession

Bin Wu, Lan Guo and Jackie Sheehan

International Labour Office for China and Mongolia



Capacity Building for
Migration Management in China
中国移民管理能力建设项目



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***Employment Conditions of Chinese Migrant Workers
in the East Midlands
A Pilot Study in a Context of Economic Recession***

(Report submitted to ILO)

Bin Wu, Lan Guo and Jackie Sheehan¹

China Policy Institute, School of Contemporary Chinese Studies
University of Nottingham

International Labour Office for China and Mongolia

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PREFACE

This pilot study was commissioned by the International Labour Office (ILO) as part of a project principally funded by the European Commission on “Capacity Building for Migration Management in China” (CBMM). The project seeks to promote cooperation between China and the EU in the field of migration management, including the prevention of human trafficking. It is jointly implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the ILO, in close partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China. Contributing partners in EU countries include the United Kingdom Border Agency.

The CBMM project has been designed as a comprehensive one, with parallel activities in China itself and several EU countries. In China, the ILO has assumed responsibility for activities including: awareness and information campaigns in selected regions on risks associated with irregular migration; capacity building for law enforcement agencies in charge of licensing private employment and recruitment agencies; and support for a migration policy review and capacity building for the provinces. In Europe, the emphasis has been on country specific research, examining the recruitment and employment conditions of Chinese workers in different sectors, in part to gather the information needed for the awareness raising activities in China. A further area of activity has been addressing the demand side in Europe of labour migration from China, through discussion fora in select EU countries including government officials, business actors and other concerned stakeholders.

The present pilot study undertaken by Dr. Bin Wu, a Senior Research Fellow of the China Policy Institute of the University

of Nottingham, is part of a broader research programme and is also intended as a background paper to facilitate discussion between Chinese and non-Chinese stakeholders. Other research has been conducted in France, Italy and the United Kingdom (shortly to be published as an edited volume), while there is ongoing research under the CBMM project in Romania. All of this should increase the knowledge base on a subject which has been little understood, as many parts of the world have seen an increase in migration flows from China.

This particular study in the East Midlands is of importance for several reasons. First, it questions a common assumption that Chinese migrants survive mainly in an underground economy, paying huge fees to the “snakeheads” who smuggle them into a destination country. Like so much of the global research on forced labour, trafficking and labour exploitation conducted by the ILO and others, it points to a more complex reality. The divisions between licit and illicit activities can become blurred when vulnerable workers can be exposed to subtle forms of coercion. Migrant workers in a regular employment status, as well as those who are clearly irregular, can be at risk of coercion unless adequate safeguards are in place.

Second, through extensive interviews as well as analysis, the report emphasizes that there is a demand for Chinese workers in this part of the United Kingdom, particularly but not only in the catering sector. The challenge is to find the ways in which supply can respond to demand through legal channels, through improved migration management, together with better monitoring of recruitment channels and mechanisms in order to prevent abusive practices. It is in this spirit that the CBMM project has been implemented in China and the EU countries, identifying possible shortcomings in the law and policy framework and its application at both ends, and promoting dialogue between the different partners in the search for practical solutions.

Thirdly, this report provides the first evidence of the impact of the current economic recession on the Chinese ethnic economy and Chinese community, and indicates how it has affected the employment and working conditions for Chinese migrants in the areas surveyed. This report offers a valuable insight into how the global economic recession has affected the employment, mobility and working conditions of Chinese migrants in the UK as a whole, and most likely also in other EU countries.

Finally, there should be no suggestion that all or most Chinese migrants are subject to exploitation in European countries including the United Kingdom. Experience shows that, in the wider economy, most migration is beneficial. However, this pilot study has given most attention to workers in those sectors of the economy where the risk of such exploitation is perhaps greater. It also provides useful suggestions as to how such risk can henceforth be minimized through practical cooperation, grievance mechanisms and other assistance to the Chinese working community.

Roger Plant

Head, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour
International Labour Office, Geneva

AND

Richard Pascoe

Director, China Policy Institute, School of Contemporary
Chinese Studies
University of Nottingham, Nottingham

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Summary

This report is one of a series of outputs prepared under the project “Capacity Building for Migration Management in China”, jointly implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), mainly funded by the European Commission under its Aeneas Programme on migration, with co-funding contributions from EU countries including Italy and the UK (UK Border Agency and Home Office). A further study has been prepared on Chinese migrants in Romania.

This East Midlands study by Dr Bin Wu of the China Policy Institute of the University of Nottingham is based mainly on field observations and in-depth interviews. It notes that according to the Office for National Statistics, the Chinese population is the fastest-growing ethnic group in the UK (up from 227,000 in 2001 to some 400,000 in 2007). The Chinese population in the UK is also evolving, from an earlier predominance in low-skill sectors of Chinese from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Vietnam towards a more plural composition with different skills levels, and different regions of origin from various parts of mainland China.

The main emphasis in the field surveys is on Chinese restaurants or take-aways, followed by retailers and Chinese herbal medicine shops. Two of the observations were in the decorating and child-minding sectors. The authors accept that the findings may not be representative of the situation of Chinese migrants in the UK as a whole (big cities, agriculture and food processing etc.). It was not possible within the time available for field work to assemble a large enough sample of informants to look specifically at the experiences and support needs of e.g. women migrants. This is one area which could be addressed by follow-up studies.

An underlying theme is the negative impact of the current economic recession on working conditions of Chinese migrants in general, affecting both irregular and regular migrant workers. The study observes however that there has been a recent decline in irregular Chinese migration (smuggling through “snakeheads”), and also an increase in the flow of irregular migrants returning to China. Factors include increased opportunities for regular migration, and also stricter application of UK measures against irregular migration. The study also detects incidence of coercion against regular migrants who possess work permits, including chefs and doctors of Chinese medicine.

The study briefly cites quarterly statistics from the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), collected since the introduction in April 2009 of a National Referral Mechanism for identifying victims of trafficking, which shows that the Chinese are the largest single nationality group among the victims.

The study also detects deficiencies in “labour brokerage” systems of labour recruitment and contracting, on both the Chinese and UK side. Some of the findings are consistent with those of other research carried out in Europe and elsewhere by the ILO’s forced labour programme, that there are many subtle forms of deception and coercion linked with inadequate recruitment mechanisms, with high-fee charging and sometimes substitution of contracts between sender and destination countries for migrant workers.

The study ends with a series of recommendations for stakeholders in UK and Chinese government agencies, the Chinese ethnic business community, UK employers and recruitment agencies, trade unions, community groups, and universities:

1. Regular roundtable meetings of all stakeholders would be helpful to address the key issues or bottlenecks in Chinese community development and the lack of communication and interaction between different Chinese groups and between the Chinese community and mainstream society in the UK. These would be particularly beneficial for bringing all the needs and the voices of Chinese migrant workers, most of which are presently hidden, to the surface. Such meetings should be held on a regular and at least annual basis in order to: review the key issues and latest developments in the Chinese ethnic economy, labour market and labour standards; develop new ideas and approaches on the above issues; and explore constructive solutions. The stakeholders should include, but not be limited to, UK government agencies, Chinese government representatives, Chinese ethnic entrepreneurs, Chinese community organisations, other civil-society organisations, and trade unions, as well as academic scholars.
2. As the vast majority of Chinese migrant workers have poor English, the Chinese-language media (including local newspapers, internet and TV channels) could take more social responsibility for: protecting migrant workers by providing more knowledge of their legal rights, background information, and examples of successful cases; commissioning special columns for scholars to analyse development issues relevant to the UK Chinese community; and reporting the voices, views and requests of migrant workers with regard to their work and livelihood. Rights advice could be provided on the websites of the Chinese embassy and consulates in the UK, in the form of FAQs, although for undocumented migrants, it would be more appropriate to have a site hosted by an NGO or an academic institution. In addition, some migrant workers

were aware of free English classes available in the area, but these clashed with working hours. Providers of language classes should be encouraged to offer e.g. early-morning time slots, accessible to workers in the catering industry.

3. It would be helpful for UK Chinese community development to identify several “model Chinese communities” nationwide as examples of communities which are not dominated by narrow sectoral or regional interests, but which have something to offer to all ethnic Chinese in their area. For this purpose, a pilot study is recommended, followed by a one-day workshop for Chinese community leaders, scholars, journalists and local-authority representatives. One of its tasks would be to identify and prioritise needs and projects for Chinese community development.
4. The creation of a Chinese community development foundation is recommended, which should be jointly funded by UK central and local authorities, Chinese entrepreneurs/companies, and, if possible, Chinese consular officials, and managed by all stakeholders. This could help different Chinese groups and organisations to work together toward community cohesion, mutual interests and long term development perspective. It could be starting from the model Chinese communities and their project proposals.
5. Given the serious shortage of catering labour and urgent need to regularize the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) sector, it is recommended that two national research projects should be prepared involving collaboration between businesspeople in the sector, Chinese community leaders and academic scholars, to explore issues affecting these industries in greater depth and make industry-specific policy proposals.

6. Based on our informants' responses, the best way to reduce irregularity in the catering sector would be to facilitate the employment of regular migrants, by adjusting the points-based system to take account of e.g. years of work experience and/or experience in a cooking school in China as markers of skilled status, in place of salary, formal academic or vocational qualifications which few chefs have. We recognize the political difficulty of making an exception for a category of migrants, but the situation in the Chinese catering sector is genuinely exceptional. In the longer term making training in Chinese catering available in the UK would reduce demand for irregular labour. Allowing regular migrants a longer period of grace in which to change jobs (at least double the present 28 days) would also make regular status more attractive and less subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers.
7. It is recommended to establish a UK Chinese University Student Volunteering Support Network under the UKSSA to provide services and support to meet the most urgent needs of Chinese migrant workers, particularly help for non-English speakers in accessing sources of social and workplace support, legal and immigration advice etc. This would also be a good opportunity for Chinese students to become more engaged with society and gain working experience beyond the university. It should be jointly funded by the Chinese Embassy and the UK government as well as university authorities. A working plan and feasibility study is needed. There are similar schemes in China organizing student volunteers to assist with education and other community projects in migrant communities which do not have access to regular urban services; and these could provide a model for some UK pilot schemes. With academic and community assistance,

students could offer both drop-in advice clinics for e.g. translation of English-language contracts, and help run a moderated, bilingual wiki site for FAQs on employment rights and migration status.

8. Toward sustainable research, development and collaboration on Chinese migration and community development in the UK, it is recommended to establish a working group to coordinate and steer the above projects. The China Policy Institute would like to provide an administrative support.

The study was presented as a background paper at a workshop on “The Employment of Chinese Migrants in the UK: Issues and Solutions”, jointly convened by the ILO and the University of Nottingham on 22-23 October 2009. Its presentation was one item on the agenda of this workshop, which brought together UK and Chinese government agencies (including the Chinese Embassy in London, the Home and Foreign Offices, the police, the UK Border Agency, and the UK Human Trafficking Centre), the Chinese ethnic business community, UK employers and recruitment agencies, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, ACAS, migration NGOs, academics and other stakeholders, in order to discuss means to improve the recruitment and employment conditions of Chinese workers in the United Kingdom.

1. Introduction

Related to China's rise and increasing integration into the world economy, the Chinese ethnic economy in the UK has seen rapid growth in both traditional businesses, such as Chinese catering, and in new sectors, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and overseas Chinese student services. As a result, the Chinese community in the UK has been going through a major transition and has increased in complexity and diversity in terms of skills, region of origin, and immigration experience and status. The recent downturn in the UK economy has also had its impact on the Chinese ethnic economy and community.

The expansion of the Chinese ethnic economy in the last decade has led to a serious shortage of migrant workers in Chinese catering and other sectors. This has resulted in a large number of irregular migrant workers coming to the UK to fill the gap, as well as to documented workers and students overstaying to work. Moreover, policies to stem the recruitment of irregular migrant workers appear to have affected both the profiles and supply of Chinese migrants in the UK, and also their working and living conditions.

Public and media attention was dramatically drawn to the plight of undocumented Chinese migrant workers in the UK in 2000, when 58 were found dead in a lorry at Dover, and again in 2004 after the deaths of 23 Chinese cockle-pickers in Morecambe Bay. Since then, human smuggling and trafficking, forced labour, and labour exploitation have been serious concerns for the British public, civil society, international organisations, and EU and UK governments. In this context, accurate and up-to-date information on the employment and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers in the UK is urgently needed. Chinese migrants represent a group of workers who still have a low profile in the UK, generally remain distant from the host

community, and are under-researched compared to most other migrant groups. Local and national government agencies have traditionally regarded them as preferring to meet their own social-welfare and support needs within the community, and a lack of English-language proficiency, even among highly-skilled TCM practitioners, continues to isolate them within their host communities. In order to meet this need, the ILO commissioned Dr. Bin Wu, a senior research fellow in the China Policy Institute and School of Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham, to conduct a survey on the employment, working and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers in the UK. Based upon a six-month intensive survey around the East Midlands region, Dr Wu's team conducted more than 40 workplace observations in different sectors including Chinese catering, TCM, child-minding, and DVD selling, and conducted more than 40 in-depth interviews with Chinese businessmen,/ women, shop managers, doctors and nurses, regular and irregular migrant workers, and part- and full-time students.

This report aims to: 1) provide general background information on Chinese migrant workers in the East Midlands and on the project survey methodology; 2) highlight our preliminary findings on the employment and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers under conditions of economic recession; 3) develop a set of policy recommendations and further research topics. In conducting this research our objectives have included:

- To uncover the latest changes, trends and patterns of Chinese migration in both sending communities in China and destination communities in UK;
- To examine the changes in working and living conditions of Chinese migrants by migration status, economic sector and ethnicity of employer;
- To identify relevant factors which may influence or determine the employment and working conditions of

migrant workers, including factors linked to the current economic recession.

2. Overview of Chinese Migrant Workers in UK

Changes in the pattern and scale of Chinese migration to the UK in recent years have contributed to the rapid growth and further diversification of one of the oldest and largest Chinese communities in Western Europe. The dominant post-Second World War pattern of Chinese migration mainly from Hong Kong's New Territories and parts of southeast Asia was affected by changes in both sending and receiving countries: improving living standards and opportunities in e.g. Malaysia and Singapore made the UK a less attractive option for would-be migrants at the same time as UK legislation to control immigration, particularly the 1971 Immigration Act, placed much stricter limits on economic migration even by skilled workers. Then from the 1980s, the renewed possibility of out-migration from the People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged as part of the country's reintegration into the global economy and rapid economic growth, in what is often termed China's "new" migration (Skeldon, 2007: 37). Many of these "new" migrants come from the same three traditional sending provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong which provided most of the UK's earliest Chinese migrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but others are from areas with no previous history of migration to Europe or to anywhere (Pieke et al., 2004: 72), including the northeast (Dongbei in Chinese), where from the late 1990s lay-offs from state-owned industry and major employment restructuring served as a push factor for migration to Europe, often via Russia (Thuno, 2007: 5-6).

Legislation since 2002 to expand economic immigration into the UK, culminating in the 2008 adoption of a points-based system for work permits (Somerville et al., 2009), has allowed some of these new Chinese migrants to work legally in the UK; but many, particularly unskilled migrant workers, remain undocumented, with all the disadvantages and vulnerabilities that this entails.

The points-based system for extra-European migrants has had a significant impact on Chinese ethnic businesses in catering, still a major employer of Chinese migrant labour, as the system's stress on English-language proficiency, academic qualifications, and salary levels is bound to disadvantage applications from the type of workers whom the industry needs, thus keeping a substantial proportion of Chinese migrant workers in the UK from regularising their employment status. Every post-war British census has recorded a large increase in the Chinese population of the UK, with the 2001 figure of 227,000 revised upwards to an estimate for 2007 of 400,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2009). The ONS identifies the Chinese as the fastest-growing ethnic group in the UK, with growth of 9.9% per year between 2001 and 2007, and notes that "more than 90% of this growth is contributed by net migration" (Office for National Statistics, 2009). Estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in the UK range from a commonly cited Home Office figure from 2001 of 430,000 (Woodbridge, 2005) via a 2008 London School of Economics (LSE) report figure of 660,000 (Somerville et al., 2009), to as many as a million, with estimates of the number of Chinese included in the total ranging from 150,000 (PICUM, 2009) to 200,000 (Pai, 2008b). Estimates of undocumented migrant numbers must always be treated with caution, but given the rapid growth in Chinese migration captured by ONS figures and the effect of recent changes in work-permit rules on Chinese migrant labour, it can be said with some confidence that a substantial proportion of the Chinese population of the UK belongs to the vulnerable category of undocumented migrants.

Despite its relatively large size, the Chinese community has never had a high profile in the UK, and there is evidence that the needs of Chinese migrant workers are still going unrecognised and unmet because of perceptions of the community as a closed and self-sufficient one, relying on family and mutual aid

(Chan et al., 2007: 510), and unwilling to engage with local authorities as providers of social services, or even with the police (Chau and Yu, 2001: 111). The geographic dispersal of the Chinese community beyond the concentrations around the main urban Chinatowns has also been identified as a factor undermining recognition of the community's needs by service providers, as most local-authority areas will only contain a relatively small number of Chinese residents, who will never be the largest ethnic-minority group (except in Northern Ireland), and therefore will tend to be neglected even when consideration is given to the needs of ethnic-minority residents in general (Chau and Yu, 2001: 115). The Dover and Morecambe Bay tragedies highlighted the dangerous and exploitative conditions in which many Chinese migrants were working in the UK, and Morecambe Bay did result in regulatory reform, with the setting up of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA). But concern about the vulnerability of Chinese migrant workers was not sustained. Much research on migrant labour in the UK over the past five years has focused on workers from Eastern Europe, particularly from the "A8" group of eight countries which joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. Although researchers may be aware of Chinese migrants among the populations of workers they are studying, language barriers may prevent them from even attempting to include this group in efforts to improve the knowledge base about migrant labour in the UK.

Within the category of undocumented migrants, the UK is also seeing rising numbers of Chinese victims of transnational trafficking. Quarterly statistics from the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) collected since the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism for identifying victims of trafficking between April and December 2009 show that Chinese trafficking victims are the largest single nationality group and constitute about 17% of the total (UKHTC, January 2010), or 70 people. The team is aware that this is an under-estimate of

the true number of victims from China, as it can take some time for e.g. asylum applicants or Chinese nationals in the criminal justice system to be properly identified as victims of trafficking. Of the total number of identified victims of trafficking in April to December 2009, 74% were female, and 48% of these women and girls were trafficked for sexual exploitation, with a further 19% trafficked into domestic servitude (78% of men and boys were trafficked for forced labour). All of those professionally involved with combating trafficking in the UK agree that identified victims constitute the tip of the iceberg, though none will venture a guess as to how much of the problem remains under the water, so to speak, in terms of overall numbers of victims. Press reports have tended to focus on cases of Chinese women trafficked into the sex industry, although the work of Frank Pieke and Hsiao-Hung Pai has found exploitation and coercion of Chinese migrant labour in a variety of industries, including agriculture, food processing, cleaning and catering. The research done at Nottingham has confirmed Pieke's finding that migration is always voluntary at departure from China, but can involve exploitation (key to the definition of trafficking) and coercion later on. In particular, we find that bonded labour and labour exploitation are not limited to undocumented smuggled or trafficked people, but also affect some legal migrant workers holding valid work permit visas who are subject to various forms of exploitation and labour abuse, often derived from their dependence on a particular employer and their lack of knowledge of English.

When Chinese migrant workers in the UK need advice or support, they seldom look outside the Chinese community for it. Chinese consular authorities were not mentioned as a source of support by our informants, with regular migrants using them solely for visa purposes and not for more general support. Undocumented migrants could be expected to be reluctant to have any contact with the authorities. Anecdotally, the research

team heard that when some Chinese nationals serving prison terms in the UK had meetings with consular officials to arrange travel documents for their eventual deportation, the officials behaved in a very hostile and disapproving manner towards the Chinese prisoners, which might help to explain why those officials do not feature prominently among the sources of support on which migrants typically draw in the UK. Even the well-established Chinese community organisations which exist in many parts of the UK do not necessarily meet the needs of all migrants. There are divisions between Chinese of different regional, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, e.g. from Guangdong, Fujian, or the northeast, between Cantonese, Hokkien and Putonghua speakers, and between long-established migrants and recent arrivals. In addition, some community groups, especially the older ones, were set up specifically to serve the interests of small-business owners in the catering trade, and such organizations are not primarily concerned with the interests of Chinese migrant employees in these or other businesses. The strong prejudices around certain groups, such as the more recently-arrived Fujianese, which characterise them as involved in criminality, also contribute to intra-community tensions, as longer-established migrants with legitimate businesses wish to dissociate themselves from newer arrivals often assumed to be involved in transnational organized crime. Reports of conflict between established members of the Chinese community, including Hokkien people originally from southern Fujian, and the newly arrived Fujianese often stigmatized as the “Fuzhou gang” (Pieke et al., 2004: 111) are less common today, despite the fact that the arrival of large numbers of Fujianese migrant workers after 1999 drove down wages in ethnic-business employment, especially in Chinatown catering in London (Pieke et al., 2004: 113). But tensions can still be seen, for example in Northern Ireland, where press reports of the discovery of cannabis farms operated with Chinese migrant labour have led the established Chinese

community to distance itself from the activities of newer arrivals. In the case of those running illegal drug production and trade, this is understandable, but it leaves isolated and unprotected the Chinese migrant workers who might just be cooking and house-keeping in these premises because they need a job, and who might have no idea that they are involved in a criminal enterprise.

During our research, we have been struck by the number of interviewees who mention that they or other irregular migrant workers they know have ended up working in hydroponic drug farms after strict enforcement of immigration rules has closed off other job opportunities, such as those in the under-staffed Chinese catering industry. As the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has observed, even a prolonged recession does not mean that demand for migrant labour will disappear, especially in hard-to-fill vacancies or ethnic niche jobs (Nathan, 2008), such as Chinese catering. Another IPPR study found that although economic considerations were important (i.e. job opportunities and wage rates in the UK compared to those in migrants' home countries, and movements in sterling exchange rates which affect the value of migrant remittances at home), decisions by migrant workers to remain in the UK were also strongly influenced by family, social and cultural factors (Pollard et al., 2008). Migrants who had met their partners in the UK, who had children here, who had set up their own businesses, and/or who enjoyed the lifestyle offered here were more likely to decide to stay. Other research on women migrants has highlighted the importance of social capital – social networks, access to support, integration into the host community – as a factor making female migrants feel settled in the UK and inclined to stay (Della Giusta and Kambhampati, 2006). Chinese migrant workers, given their relative isolation even within the Chinese community in many cases, tend to lack social capital and ties to the host community, but may also be subject to powerful

influences against returning to China, such as a reluctance to go back until they can show significant economic benefit from their time in the UK, and the need to stay to earn enough to pay off migration debt. Thus it is possible they will in effect be stranded in the UK as recession increases competition for jobs (among migrants, mostly, rather than between migrants and UK-born workers (Manacorda et al., 2006)), but without the benefit of the kind of social capital and community ties that keep other migrant workers in the UK during economic downturns.

3. Research Methodology

An extensive survey was conducted in Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands region, which was selected for a number of reasons.

- Firstly, it differs from Chinese enclaves in big cities such as London, Manchester, and Birmingham where the Chinese ethnic economy and migrant population are concentrated. Nottingham and the East Midlands represent another pattern of Chinese business and migrant-worker employment in the UK, a pattern of scattered geographical location, high mobility and diversity.
- Secondly, Nottingham as the capital of the East Midlands region hosts the University of Nottingham and its School of Contemporary Chinese Studies. So not only could the research team obtain support from both local authorities and the Chinese community, but the location also provided a good opportunity to explore the possibility of Chinese migrant workers' participation in local Chinese community development, an important objective of this project.
- Finally, this project could also benefit from proximity to

other relevant resources and research, such as a recently completed project conducted by the Identity, Citizenship and Migration Centre at the University of Nottingham. Many local agencies including Nottingham City Council, the East Midlands Development Agency, and the Nottingham Chinese Community Association have expressed their interest in participating in and supporting this project. The project is also linked with another local one on the theme of the integration of foreign migrants into Nottingham city.

From the start of the project in March 2009, we encountered some difficulties in designing and implementing a realistic survey plan. Firstly, it was difficult to construct a sample frame for Chinese business in Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands due to: A) the lack of an official dataset for all Chinese business registrations (except in the catering sector); B) the lack of a Chinese business yellow pages such as exists in London, Manchester and Birmingham; C) and the lack of an information centre (e.g. property agency) for Chinese business in this area; D) out of date information of Chinese residents in 2001 Census. These factors affected the representative nature of the sample constructed, and it was not possible to conduct detailed quantitative analysis on it or to look at e.g. the specific experiences of women migrants within the time available.

Secondly, in a context of economic recession, there are relatively few Chinese migrants working in sectors other than Chinese restaurants and takeaways. Downturns in the domestic and commercial property markets and a reduction in small-business start-ups because of difficulties in borrowing from banks hit the decoration and shop-fitting businesses which some new Chinese migrants had been working in prior to the recession. This made it much more difficult to compare the working conditions of Chinese employees in Chinese- and

British-owned businesses, and between catering and other sectors. Nonetheless, we have included several new sectors such as TCM, childcare and DVD selling to broaden our observations and interviews.

Thirdly, migration status has always been a sensitive subject on which to conduct interviews with Chinese business owners and workers, but the recent campaign of raids by police and the UK Border Agency, starting with a high-profile operation involving more than a hundred police officers in London's Chinatown restaurants in October 2007 (BBC News, 18 October 2007), made many potential respondents even more reluctant to be interviewed or to introduce their friends as research subjects. As a result, it took more time to get access to a viable number of informants and to gain their trust.

Fourthly, Chinese migrant workers are highly mobile. After a successful in-depth interview, a useful interviewee might promise to introduce friends to participate in the survey, only for the team to find out eventually, from the worker's former boss, that contact had been lost because the worker had been transferred to work in another city, with the loss to the team of all the potential contacts he had offered.

Finally, there is little communication or social networking even among Chinese migrants from the same region. For instance, two Fujianese takeaways were located near each other for more than a year, but the two owners never said hello to each other. We were struck by the fact that vertical social networks with friends or relatives in big cities like London seemed to be much more important than horizontal networks with other Chinese migrant workers within the same region or location.

Given the above constraints, the following methods were used in the survey:

- Recruiting and using several university students who have had working experience in local Chinese catering and TCM businesses, so that their experience and social networks could be used to gain the access to the field. In particular, we recruited two Fujianese students to participate in the survey.
- Establishing a collaborative relationship with many Chinese community and business organisations at national and local levels to exchange information and gain their support.
- Creating several “observation stations” in different locations and sectors as local contact points for regular observations, meetings, consultations, as well as to ensure the safety of researchers. The stations included a local Chinese community club, a number of Chinese restaurants and TCM shops, a DVD seller’s home and an asylum seeker’s home.
- Internet searching was used to gain information on Chinese restaurants and takeaways, and to create a sample frame for observation and survey later. Occasionally, it was used to contact and interview key informants.

The survey was mainly carried out in Nottingham and Leicester, to increase access and also to reduce the risk of exposing the identity of Chinese workshop participants and interviewees. Both Nottingham and Leicester host two universities. As a result, Chinese students account for a large proportion of the local Chinese population.

The survey consisted of two core elements: field observation and in-depth interviews. For the former, Table 1 shows that of the total of 61 observations taken during the survey, 51 (64%) were Chinese restaurants or take-aways, 8 (13%) were Chinese retailers or TCM shops, and the remaining 2 were in the

decorating and child-minding sectors. Turning to entrepreneurs' region of origin in China, furthermore, over half (52.4%) of all the businesses were controlled by established Chinese groups including Hong Kongers and other overseas Chinese from Malaysia and Vietnam, 30% by southern Chinese, mainly from Fujian and Guangdong, and the remaining one quarter are Dongbeinese or other northern Chinese (from e.g. Shandong, Inner Mongolia, and Jilin). The Fujian, Guangdong and Dongbei groups between them owned or controlled nearly half of the Chinese businesses surveyed, where 100% would have been owned by Hong Kong and other Overseas Chinese a decade ago.

Table 1 Profile of observations by business sector and entrepreneurs' region of origin

Business sector	No.	%	Region of origin	No.	%
Takeaway	38	62.3	Hong Kong	26	42.6
Restaurant	13	21.4	Overseas Chinese	6	9.8
Retailer	5	8.2	Fujianese	14	23.0
TCM	3	4.9	Guangdong	4	6.6
Decoration	1	1.6	Dongbei	7	19.7
Childcare	1	1.6	North China	4	6.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>100</i>

In the Chinese catering sector, in particular, we adopted a procedure of random sampling to select a number of Chinese restaurants/take-aways for workplace observations and sources of in-depth interviewees later. An online information search identified a number of Chinese shops which could make up a sound sample frame. Taking into account time and transportation costs, a number of post-code areas were selected as targeted areas for further investigation. Several Chinese sample fields selected for intensive observation and visits and Chinese restaurants/take-aways were visited by a survey

team of two to three people. An observation form was applied to all sampled Chinese shops covering a list of information to collect including type of business, the year the current business was started, entrepreneurs' region of origin, previous owners, background of staff in kitchens and service halls, business turnover volume, prices (menus) and business strategies, accommodation and welfare for workers, etc. There were two reasons for our conducting random workplace observation:

- To establish a sound sample frame to quantify the ownership transformation of Chinese catering business from established groups like Cantonese and overseas Chinese to new migrants such as Fujianese, Dongbeinese and other groups;
- To develop opportunities for access to targeted people for in-depth interviews through convenient sampling method (e.g. snowball sampling).

During a four-week period, we selected 6 post-code zones within an area of 200 km² around Nottingham City centre. A total of 42 Chinese restaurants or take-aways accepted our visits and offered relevant information. Furthermore, one third permitted us to re-visit for in-depth interviews. Only one site declined our request for access.

Besides random and non-random workplace observations, we conducted 37 in-depth interviews in Nottinghamshire and Leicester. Generally, two thirds were selected or introduced by our informants in several key observation bases, while one third resulted from successful visits for random workshop observation. Table 2 shows profiles of interviewees by gender, migration status, region of origin, job title and employment sector when the interviews were carried out. It shows a wide spread of migrant experiences.

Table 2 Profiles of interviewees by selected indicator

Category	Item	No	%
Gender	Male	26	70.3
	Female	11	29.7
Region of Origin	Fujian	14	37.8
	Dongbei (NE)	10	27.0
	Other Mainland	9	24.3
	HK & Overseas	4	10.8
Migration Status	British	6	16.2
	PR holder	9	24.3
	WP holders	5	13.5
	Student	6	16.2
	Irregular	11	29.7
Job title	Entrepreneur	13	35.1
	Chef	9	24.3
	Manual	6	16.2
	Manager	3	8.1
	Doctor	2	5.4
	Street Seller	2	5.4
	Nanny/Childminder	1	2.7
	Other	1	2.7
Sector	Catering	26	70.3
	Retailer	4	10.8
	TCM	3	8.1
	Childcare	3	8.1
	Decoration	1	2.7
Total		37	100

Notes: PR—Permanent Resident; WP—Work Permit

4.Economic Recession and its Impact on Chinese Business

Given that this survey was conducted at a time of economic recession, before turning to the migration patterns and employment conditions of both regular and irregular Chinese migrant workers, it is important to consider the impact of this recession on the Chinese ethnic economy as a whole.

1. Changes in the business environment: an overview

Changes in the Chinese business environment in recent years have caused a transformation of the ethnic labour market which has influenced and to some extent determined the mobility of Chinese migrants in the UK and their working conditions. According to our survey, there are four factors which need to be taken into account. Firstly, Chinese catering and other businesses have experienced reduced demand from customers who find their products and services less affordable in recession conditions, resulting in a numerical decline in the Chinese labour force in both Chinese catering and other sectors. This decline in demand from established customers has been partially offset in some sectors by increased demand from Chinese students in the UK, many of whom come from affluent families and can afford to eat out in Chinese restaurants. This demand is not year-round, however, and is geographically skewed to university cities. Secondly, the weakness of the British pound against foreign currencies including the Chinese Yuan has led to an increase in the costs of imported materials and a depreciation of the value of remittances of British cash to China. Thirdly, government measures to tackle the employment of irregular migrant workers have included increasingly frequent checks on workers' papers and punishment of employers who recruit irregular migrants. This has made many catering employers reluctant to take on undocumented workers despite labour shortages, with the result that greater pressure in the form of long hours and intensity of work falls on documented workers. Fourthly, as already alluded to above, there has been a continuous growth in the Chinese population of the UK, especially Chinese students, and a consequent increase in demand for ethnic products including Chinese food and services.

The catering sector, still the backbone of the Chinese ethnic

economy and employer of the majority of Chinese migrants, has suffered a double impact from the economic recession: a decline in local customers for Chinese food on the one hand, and a significant increase in raw food material costs due to the depreciation of Sterling on the other. The quotation below represents the voices of large numbers of Chinese businessmen and women:

Q: What has been the impact of the economic recession on your business?

A: Now we are feeling the devaluation of the pound Sterling and increase in price of raw food materials from around one year ago. For example, chicken fillet was £2.50 per box before, sometimes with a special offer it could be £2.00; but now it is £4.00 per box. The price has almost doubled. Another example is beef, which was £3.50 per kilo, and now is £5.30 per kilo. However, despite the devaluation of the pound and the increase in price of raw materials, we cannot increase the price of our dishes, as we will lose our customers in the more heated competition among Chinese catering. Now we already have fewer customers than before, around 30 % less than before. (Interview 6)

This fall in profits is clearly a cause for concern for many Chinese catering business owners, but some have faced such severe losses in the economic downturn that they have had to shut down their business completely, as in the case of this Cantonese chief chef:

My business, called the Hong Kong Lou, has just been closed down recently. I ran that restaurant for three and half years and signed the lease for 20 years. It was a luxury restaurant with 100 seats, and used to make £7000-8000 per week. From the beginning of 2008 my restaurant business started to slow down, and some of my customers who used

to come to my restaurant 2 to 3 times a week to have dinner were just coming once a week because of their tight money situation. They told me that the construction and housing economy were very low. At first I tried to wait until business got better, but finally I realized I could not afford the bills, VAT, all the taxes and daily expenses, and so I decided to close down. I did not ask for the deposit back and just paid the rent, and asked the agency to sell the lease to someone else. It's not just me; I've seen a lot of Chinese restaurants and take-aways close down. I heard some take-aways only open at weekends to avoid high expenses. (Interview 4)

While the above quotes illustrate a serious challenge facing Chinese catering and other sectors, not all interviewees in our survey shared this negative view. From our observations, it seems that Chinese take-aways have suffered less of an impact from the economic recession than Chinese restaurants. Furthermore, different Chinese restaurants have varied in terms of their capacity to adapt and adjust, resulting in different performance. One Chinese restaurant owner, asked if the financial crisis had had a big negative impact on his business, said:

A: No, the economic crisis does not affect us. It is cheap here. It seems that my business is doing much better than before, though my friends have complained that their businesses are becoming worse and worse. I know some restaurants are lowering their prices. However, we do not have to. Actually, we still have our old customers.

Q: Could you tell us why your business is doing better regardless of the financial crisis?

A: Generally, I update my menu within three months, and focus on those dishes which the other take-away stores have not got. Moreover, British people's daily spend on food is over £10 , but in my restaurant, the price is under

£10, and so they think the food here is cheaper and they can afford it. They often chose between pizza, KFC or Chinese food. So the financial crisis doesn't have a big impact on British people's spending on food and neither does it on my business. I know I have quite a number of frequent customers who visit my business twice each week. For example, there is a customer who has regularly come to my restaurant on Saturdays for over 8 years.

This restaurant owner had seen a decline in the value of his business, however. He had bought it from a Hong Kong proprietor for £60,000 two years earlier, but reported that the financial crisis had now brought the price down to £30-40,000.

It seems that this reduced impact on some Chinese ethnic businesses in the UK is closely related to the rapid increase in the Chinese population here, especially the increase in Chinese students. They have taken advantage of the depreciation of Sterling and thus lower tuition fees and living expenses at UK universities to come to study here in greater numbers. This has resulted in increasing demand for Chinese food and relevant businesses such as restaurants, supermarkets, and entertainment. Below is a quote from a Chinese entrepreneur:

Q: Do you think the current financial crisis has had an impact on your business?

A: It is all right. Actually, my business is getting much better. In the financial crisis, studying abroad is not as expensive as before. Many Chinese students have come to the UK. In this city, we can see the increase in Chinese students here. Since my shop is the best shop in this area, my business is really good. That is the positive side. On the other hand, the UK importers have to pay much more money to import goods from China. They will transfer such extra costs on to us. My shop only has a relatively small storehouse where not too much inventory can be held. Every week, I will be

offered a different price when I replenish stocks from these distributors. Anyway, the financial crisis has had a limited impact on my business. We think Chinese are making money for your British economy. Such a feeling makes me proud (Interview 22).

4.2 The Transformation of the Chinese catering sector

While the economic recession has compelled many established Chinese entrepreneurs, mainly Cantonese, to close down businesses, this has also created opportunities for new Chinese migrants, in particular Fujianese, to take over their businesses. As a result, we have witnessed more and more Chinese restaurants and take-aways being run by new Chinese migrants. Of a total of 40 Chinese restaurants and take-aways visited for this study, 15 or about 40% had been taken over by their current owners or managers within the past 3 years and about one quarter (9) within one year. Almost of all these shops had been taken over by new migrants from mainland China including Fujianese, Dongbeinese (from the three north-eastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning) or migrants from other provinces. Table 2 shows the average length of time for which a sample Chinese restaurant/take-away has been managed by the current owner or manager. It shows clearly that 60% of the sample is now managed by new Chinese migrants instead of old migrants from Hong Kong, Malaysia or Vietnam. Furthermore, more and more Fujianese or Dongbeinese have become owners and managers of catering businesses rather than employees, as in the past. This table indicates clearly a trend of business transformation from established groups like Cantonese and overseas Chinese to new Chinese migrants, resulting in a plural structure of ownership in this sector.

Table 3 Duration of current ownership of sample restaurants/ takeaways

Region of origin	Mean Years	No.	% of Total N
Dongbei	2.40	5	12.5%
Fujian	3.08	13	32.5%
Other provinces	4.00	6	15.0%
Hong Kong	8.54	13	32.5%
Overseas Chinese	12.33	3	7.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>5.60</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Focusing on the Fujianese entrepreneurs, furthermore, 8 out of 12, or two thirds, entered the UK less than 10 years ago, while 3 fall into the category of irregular migrants. In addition, we found three establishments run by students or GWP visa holders.

It is important to emphasise that while the economic recession has offered opportunities for many Fujianese migrants to turn themselves from migrant workers into entrepreneurs, many Fujianese businesses have also been closed down due to the recession. We were surprised by the fact that many Fujianese interviewees who were irregular migrant workers when we interviewed them had had ownership or management experience before the recession. The reasons why and how a non-Permanent Resident (PR) and irregular migrant opens a business in UK can be seen from the example below:

Q: Can an irregular migrant open his own takeaway?

A: It depends. People don't always need legal status to open a business here. Under some circumstances in the past, people only needed to have a national insurance number and an account number to open their own shops. Now, however, it is more restricted, but it still depends on how lucky you are. For example, Mr. Wang and I are partners in this takeaway, and we bought the lease from a Fujianese,

who treats us as his fellow Fujianese home mates. Neither of us has legal status, but the previous Fujianese boss has permanent resident status, and so he offered to be our guarantor to the landlord, so finally we can run this takeaway. I think there are two reasons for it: 1st, he wanted to transfer this takeaway to us, but we don't have legal status, and so we could only take over the shop if he became our guarantor. 2nd, as our home mate, he knew and trusted us, as people only act as a guarantor to others based on a strong personal relationship. But one of my friends was not lucky enough to run his own takeaway. He wanted to buy a shop and came to this city to search for a suitable shop for a long time, but failed to buy one; either the shop area was not nice, or the shop business was too bad. (Interview 34)

The rapid emergence of Fujianese businesses in the Chinese catering sector has caused intensive debates amongst the established merchants who have reservations about the quality of food and services provided by Fujianese entrepreneurs. Below is a quote from a Cantonese owner whose opinion is rather representative of many old Chinese entrepreneurs:

I think that more than 30% of takeaways are run by Fujianese migrants. They do not have any standards on food quality and decoration of their takeaways. They just think that if their food is cheap, they will win customers. That is why they can open a new takeaway on both sides of your restaurant quickly. For example, our restaurant only uses 100% chicken meat, but I know some of them are cooking with 60-70% chicken meat to cut costs in Fujianese takeaways. This is not good for the whole Chinese catering business, as the customer will think Chinese food is not good. (Interview 5).

4.3 Decline in the Decorating/Construction Sector

In addition to the Chinese catering sector, the construction and painting/decorating sector had become a major area for Chinese migrant employment in the UK prior to the recession. Many interviewees have mentioned their experience of working in this sector. Most jobs are undertaken through sub-contracting from a licensed company or agency. Under the subcontracting system, delays in payment or failure to pay migrant workers are not rare occurrences either in China or in the UK. In this regard, irregular migrant workers are more at risk than regular workers who can be protected via legal assistance or trade union membership. Below is a story which offered insight into this issue in the decoration/construction sector:

A: I had a period of working experience in decoration in Britain which was easier than it is in China. The team head undertook the decoration work for a hotel, to put in a timber floor, whitewash the walls and windows and install the toilets. After losing my jobs in UK factories, a friend introduced me to decoration work. At the beginning I was doing some tidy-up work, but the boss noticed I was good at woodwork, and so asked me to start doing woodwork.

Q: How many people worked in a decoration team?

A: Three workers and one boss. Everyone does everything; there is no serious division of labour and even the boss needs to do some manual work.

Q: What was the pay rate? And how are the working conditions?

A: Usually we started work around 8am, had lunch at noon and then we kept working till it was too dark to see, and everyone had something to eat and go to bed. The boss was a Fujianese, and he did not dare treat me badly. For

example, at the beginning I was told that we would be paid weekly, but after starting, he said he had to buy the raw materials for decoration, so we would have to wait to the end; however, he told us that his superior boss from the hotel had not paid him any money yet, so we had to wait. Basically the decoration work was contracted to a Hong Kong lady, and then she sub-contracted our boss to do the decoration. So when my boss told me that the Hong Kong lady hadn't paid him, I said OK, I don't want you to write any IOU note for our money, as it made no sense. I said you go and ask her to write an IOU note for our wages, and I will go and ask her to pay us. Finally that HK lady really did write an IOU note for us, and after I got it, I went back to stay with my son. I heard from other friends that this Fujianese cheated other workers out of their wages, so that is why I did not trust him, and so I told him you may be able to cheat others, but you cannot cheat me.

Q How long did you wait to receive your wages?

A After I contacted her, she explained that she had two decoration jobs going at the same time in two hotels but one emergency happened and so she did not receive the money, so she wanted me to wait two or four weeks and then she would pay all my money. In the end she did pay me as promised and then I was able to relax.

Q How about the others? Did the others get their money?

A Yes, they just followed me. I was not afraid of our boss, as if he did not do what I told him, I could sell all his decoration stuff in the second-hand market, which would get me an equivalent amount of money. Also I knew that Hong Kong lady quite well, as she had a relationship with a young Shenyang guy for whom my wife was doing baby-sitting. My wife was unhappy with doing baby-sitting for her children, as she was sometimes very fussy, and so I told

my wife to stop working for her. This was one of reasons why I quit doing decoration. In addition, I got a chronic pain in my stomach after that. Another reason I quit that job was that I had to wait a long time for payment. I like to work steadily and get paid regularly, which means that if I work, I get paid, and if not, then I can just stop. (Interview 10)

As a part of the UK construction industry, unsurprisingly, the Chinese painting and decorating sector has become a major casualty of the economic recession. Below is a story of the rise and fall of a Chinese decoration team employed by a Fujianese entrepreneur:

A few years ago, I hired 12 persons working at different decoration sites and I had new decoration work to be started almost every month throughout the year. At the same time, I bought different takeaways from previous owners and then decorated them to be re-sold. Every year, I would buy around 15 to 20 takeaway shops and sell them on. At the peak of my career, I employed around 38 people, who worked on around 10 decoration sites simultaneously in Wales and northern England. I was living in Sheffield at that time, while my business in Wales was taken care of by my cousin and my brother-in-law. I paid them high salaries and I could not believe that they would betray me. But in 2007, they founded their own company and took all my workers from all my four decoration sites in Wales into their company. My business was built on my reputation. Hence, once they founded their company, there was no business at all. I was shocked by this reality. I had lost half of my business. It was worth around £150K – 200K. It left me no other choice but to keep my business safe. I could not afford these things happening again. However, the bad news did not end there. This restaurant, NK, I did not mean to operate it. I bought it at the beginning of 2008, decorated it and was

ready to sell it. At that time, the financial situation in the UK had worsened. After investing £128K in the decoration and equipment, I wanted to sell it at a better price. Since it was hard for a buyer to borrow money from the bank, it was hard to find a buyer on the market. I did not know when I would be able to get my investment back. Meanwhile, I had to maintain operations to make money to pay the rent. Even though this restaurant does not lose money, it is not what I expected. Now, I have to take care of my decoration business as well as this restaurant. I am so tired, exhausted, and suffering great stress. I have to visit my decoration sites and then go back home to see how the restaurant is doing. (Interview 26)

4.4 Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

The economic recession has had a serious impact on TCM, another newly-emerging sector within the Chinese ethnic economy in the UK. Unlike the painting and decorating sector which was dominated by a subcontracting system and dependent upon low- or un-skilled irregular migrant workers, the Chinese herbal medicine sector is made up of purely ethnic businesses run by Chinese entrepreneurs, with staff who are either skilled workers (Chinese doctors) or Chinese students who are allowed to work in the UK legally. Below is a quote from a sales assistant who talked about the recession's impact on the Chinese herbal medicine sector:

As a sales assistant for a Chinese herbal shop, I am feeling great pressure to do my work well. To be honest, our company is not well governed. Yesterday (Friday) afternoon, the head office gave me a call to say that the company had decided to shut down my shop. He gave me 3 days to notify all the current customers. Only 3 days, how can the company

do this!!! I am in a dilemma. I have regular customers with good relationships. I know business is business but as a company you cannot do things like this. It not only ruins my reputation, but all Chinese businessmen's reputations.

This morning, I came to my shop much earlier than before. I sorted out all the current customers' files, informing them that we are going to shut the shop by next Wednesday. They all got very annoyed. They told me that I have to give them one week's notice. I listened to their blaming, complaining and even angry words, and I had to accept it. Most of my customers have paid much money in advance, so I made arrangements for them. Some took several more weeks' herbal medicine; some have filed refund forms waiting to get their money back; and some have been transferred to nearby cities where the company has branches.

When I had finally finished all this work later in the day, I received a phone call from head office again. The manager told me that the big boss was delighted to hear that there was a Chinese herbal shop nearby that had been shut down, and so our shop could carry on in business. I was just shocked by this updated information. Does head office treat this issue very seriously? I do not know. The big boss just changed his mind upon hearing that another shop has been shut down. He could not even confirm the source, because there was no such shop nearby as far as I knew. But there is one thing that I am pretty sure about, and that is that no one will trust this shop again. The customers will never know whether the shop will be shut down or not. I can fully understand their worries. Sooner or later, this shop will be shut down, I think. (Interview 21)

4.5 The Emergence of New Sectors

With the growth of the Chinese population in the UK, many new service jobs besides Chinese catering and herbal medicine have also emerged. One such job is that of nanny or child-minder for Chinese families. Below is a quote which explains the nature and reason why the child-minding sector is increasingly popular within Chinese ethnic economies:

Q: You mentioned that you have recruited a nanny recently. Why didn't you send your baby to the local infant school or nursery?

A: Certainly, I have to say now there is a great demand in the market for nannies, as lots of Chinese women have married and given birth here, so they need nannies to look after the babies, especially when your baby is too young to go to infant school or nursery. Another reason why the nannies are so popular among the Chinese mothers now is that the outbreak of swine flu in the UK has made nursery and infant schools high-risk places to go because children can catch the virus there, and personally I think my baby is too young to have anti-virus protection in the nursery, and I do not want my baby to have any infection. I prefer that she stays at home with the nanny.

Q: How did you find the nanny?

A: I went to a website called as Netbirds to advertise for a nanny, and quite a lot of different people contacted me. Some have legal status to work, and others don't. And then a woman contacted me and offered to work for me as a nanny at £200 per week. While I was considering her offer, this nanny, who is now working for me, contacted me and offered to work for me at £180 per week. Meanwhile, she told me on the phone she was an experienced nanny and so I decided to let her come to try for one week first.

According to my baby's nanny, it is hard for a family with a baby to find a suitable nanny. On the one hand, if you choose a nanny who is younger than the mother, it will be a risk for the mother to lose her husband. On the other hand, some Fujianese undocumented nannies offered to work for me providing 24-hour care for my baby, and boasted to me on the phone that the babies they looked after even liked to stay with them more than with their real mothers. I was scared about that, as I do not want my baby to like my nanny more than me. The baby is mine, not someone else's, and so I also do not want to hire this kind of nanny.

Q: What is the pay rate normally as a nanny?

A: Normally it is between £180 and £200. Some undocumented Fujianese nannies even offered to work 24 hours a day and six days a week for me for £180 per week. My nanny was paid £250 weekly for looking after 3 children in her last job. Now she is working for us at £180 per week for looking after my one baby, but I only ask her to work 10 hours each day and five days a week. Certainly I can afford her accommodation and food.

Q: What is the difference between hiring documented and undocumented nannies?

A: My husband and I were thinking of hiring an undocumented nanny, but finally we gave up this idea, as we were worried that if the nanny treated my baby badly or kidnapped my baby and ran away, we could not ask the police to find them and protect us and our baby. As for documented nannies, we can ask them to show their passports to us before we hire them, and if something happens later, we can use the documents to go the police for protection. (Interview 35)

4.6 Opportunities in Other Sectors

Finding it difficult in the current climate to get work in Chinese restaurants or take-aways, many Chinese migrants have turned to “other sectors” such as DVD selling, smuggling cigarettes, or even tending cannabis farms. According to a recent article in the local press (Chinese Business Gazette, July 2009), there were at least 6,000 Fujianese people engaged in trading in discs (another estimate puts the number at about 10,000, an average of one in every ten Fujianese in the UK, involved in the sale of DVDs). Below is the story of how one DVD seller entered this sector.

Why I became a DVD seller

Since I became an asylum seeker in 2004, the government has offered me free accommodation with a little pocket money in this city. So I have moved here to find any working opportunity. At the very beginning, I was working in a decoration team headed by a British man who paid me £30 per day. This did not cover my living expenses. Then I found a job at a Chinese restaurant. The boss paid me £180 a week to wash the dishes and clean the toilets. Since last year, the immigration police has been investigating Chinese restaurants more strictly. Many bosses dared not to hire undocumented workers like me. I lost my job again. This time, I found it very hard to find a new job. Maybe, because of the financial crisis, many restaurant businesses are struggling. So I have become a DVD seller. I am currently selling counterfeit DVDs and smuggled cigarettes. Everyday, I will walk across the street to meet the customer. But the business is still hard. I sell £2 per DVD and £3 per pack of Chinese cigarettes. You see, today, I only sold 5 DVDs and got only £10. I get this illegal stuff from a Fujianese axe gang. Meanwhile I have to pay so called “protection fees” of

around £20 a month. I used to walk around city bars to sell DVDs, but nowadays, 7 out of 10 bars have closed down due to the economic recession (Interview 16).

These “new” jobs, which may sometimes be high-profit compared with traditional jobs in the Chinese catering or construction sector, are high-risk in nature. Below is a story illustrating some of the risks:

I heard after the financial crisis that it is harder to find a regular job, that some Chinese are doing “irregular” jobs, which are very risky, such as selling DVDs, and they are often beaten, arrested, and robbed. I remember once in Birmingham, I happened to see a Fujianese girl selling DVDs, and two teenagers stopped her in a small, dark lane. They not only wanted all her DVDs but also wanted to abuse her. I was walking by, and so I walked to her and started talking to her: “You are selling DVDs,” I said. “Now it is so dark, why you are still working?” At the same time, I gave her a sign to escape. She understood that I was trying to help her, and the two teenagers saw me and ran away. She appreciated my help and wanted to offer me some DVDs. I said it was not easy to sell DVDs, and she would be better to go home earlier and avoid the rough area near the railway station where there are lots of nasty teenagers.

In July 2009, the closure of a processing plant for pirated optical discs run by an Iranian gang had a big impact on the supply of DVD discs. The disclosure of the low cost of counterfeit disc production in the local press in the area concerned resulted in many customers refusing to pay the original asking price of £3-5, but instead offering only 30p-50p. This made it much harder for DVD sellers to continue in business. During the period of our survey, many interviewees talked about rumours of “other jobs” involving criminal activities in the UK. Below is a

story of a Hong Kong restaurant owner:

Some friends phoned me and complained it was really hard to find a job. Luckily some employers still dare to hire them, but some of the friends still haven't found a job yet. I heard some of them have to do some "other" work, such as planting marijuana, selling DVDs, robbing, or kidnapping. I heard from my friends about a real case that happened in London. A Chinese student was kidnapped by them, and then the student's family in China had to pay a huge ransom to them. Also I heard in London DVD-sellers always fight among each other for more profits. Besides criminal activities and restaurants, do we have other jobs to do? (Interviews 9)

5. Mobility and Trends of Chinese Migration to UK

The changes in working environment described in the previous section have profoundly influenced the ethnic labour market here as well as the mobility of both regular and irregular Chinese migrant workers. Based upon an analysis of fresh data collected in the field, this section aims to reveal the demand for Chinese migrant workers in general, and workers' mobility across sectors, regions and national borders in particular.

5.1 Shortage of legal migrant workers

We heard many complaints about the shortage of Chinese workers from catering businesses, still the main employer of Chinese ethnic labour in the UK, which were feeling the effects of measures taken against irregular migrant workers. Below is a typical response describing the difficulties faced by Chinese catering entrepreneurs:

A shortage of labour is a big headache for us. On the one hand, there aren't enough workers coming here through legal channels, and they require higher pay; on the other hand, we don't dare to use workers without the legal working documents. If we want to recruit local British workers, they don't know how to do our Chinese cooking at all, and it cannot be taught in one day. Also some terminology in the kitchen is really hard to explain to them so that they can understand; meanwhile, we cannot speak English well, and it will be hard to communicate with them if working together. That is why I think the labour shortage is a big problem to us. (Interview 6)

Mr. Wang, a new entrepreneur with a Sichuanese restaurant who has worked around Britain for five years, shared his own experience of the dilemma of shortages in legal migrant workers in the catering sector:

A: I have worked from south to north in Britain, all over the place; most Chinese restaurants have to keep using these so-called illegal workers, not only because of the low cost of these human resources, but also because of the lack of legal labour in the kitchen. However, once they are found by the police, the boss will be fined and the illegal workers will be arrested. After the boss pays their fines, the illegal workers will be released. I do not think it is a good solution to deal with the labour problem this way. Moreover, with these illegal workers loafing about the town and doing nothing, I's bound to cause many other social problems.

Q: Do you think the labour shortage will affect your business?

A: Certainly it will in the near future. For example, when we want to develop our restaurant into a larger one, we have to face the labour shortage directly, where shall we find

legal workers at a reasonable price? Even now, sometimes when we are busy we need another worker to do tidying up and clean-up work in the kitchen, but it is a big problem for us as we could not easily find and afford to hire a legal worker due to their higher pay rate. (Interview 9)

5.2 Experience of job mobility

It is a common feature among Chinese migrants that they are highly mobile in the UK across sectoral and regional boundaries. Many of our interviewees reported changing jobs frequently, sometimes staying for only one or two weeks in a post before moving on, and many had worked in several different locations around the UK, while very few had experienced no job mobility. This has been particularly true over the last two years when it has been harder for irregular workers to find and keep a job, resulting in higher job turnover. Many informants had experienced working in British factories before the economic recession. Here is a story of a Dongbei irregular worker:

A: When I arrived in UK in 2002, I lived with my son and worked in a small town near Peterborough, where I worked in many UK factories such as yoghurt, fruit and chocolate factories. All of these jobs were found by my son through local agencies. He helped me to fill in the application form and contact the agency. His English is very good. He left his mobile contact with the agency, and when they contacted him, he called me and prepared me a lunch box and told me to wait for their transport to the factory.

Q: How was the pay rate and working conditions?

A: Some of the jobs were paid at £3 per hour, others at £4 or £5 something, and they were not hard work. Working with British workers is never hard, as after 2 hours there is a

tea break, and another 2 hours later you can have a rest. In the peak season I made around £200 per week, and in the off-season I made around £150.

Q: Why did you not keep working in English factories?

A: After Blair signed an agreement with the EU, a lot of Polish workers came, and then the fruit factory was full of Polish workers. They have passports, NI cards, and all the legal documents to work. Gradually we Chinese lost out to competition in that area, as we do not have passports and NI cards. (Interview 10).

5.3 Return of irregular migrant workers

Influenced by changes in the working environment over the last few years, some Chinese migrants see remaining in the UK as less attractive because of the depreciation of the pound sterling to the Chinese yuan by about 30%. This is particularly true for those from urban China who never intended to stay in the UK for long, but were only looking to make money in the short term. It is only worth the while of many migrants to stay in the UK if the amount of money they can remit home is significantly higher than what they could earn in China; otherwise, the separation from family members, long hours, cramped or substandard living conditions, the risks involved in jobs such as DVD or cigarette selling, and sometimes the hostility of the host community, are not worth tolerating for any length of time. The economic recession and difficulties in finding a job have forced many irregular migrant workers to leave for China earlier than planned. An irregular migrant spoke about his friends going back to China in a conversation recorded below:

Q: Since the financial crisis, have irregular workers found it more difficult to get a job?

A: Yes, definitely. 18 of my friends have gone back to China already now. Some of my friends working in London's China Town and Manchester left their jobs, as their wages were reduced. After working here for almost 10 years, they do not want to keep working hard in the kitchen with lower wages. (Interview 14)

Moreover, urban Chinese with white-collar jobs at home who wanted to earn quick money during their short stay in the UK have returned to China since the economic recession. This is reflected in the following conversation with an irregular worker who had overstayed her tourist visa before she returned to China:

A: I was doing business from 1991 in Hunan, and then I moved to open a restaurant in Shenzhen. Honestly, I did not have any working experience doing heavy physical work before I came to Britain. But with my personality, I like travelling around and exploring the outside world, and that is why I decided to come to the UK in 2007. Certainly, at the same time if I can make some money, it would be better; if I dislike the job, I can just take this chance to travel around in Britain and have lost nothing. I was gratified that till now I already transferred 120,000 yuan (about £12,000) in earnings back home from my hard work in Britain.

Q: What made you decide to return to China next month?

A: My daughters told me I had made enough money and kept persuading me to come home, as my daughters do not want me to work that hard in a foreign country. They said my two sons-in-law and my daughters all have a good education and good jobs; they just want me to have leisure time for the rest of my life. Moreover, after the economic recession, the exchange rate between British Sterling and

Chinese yuan has gone down by 30%, so for example if I transferred £500 back home before, it was worth 6,500 yuan, but now it is only equal to 4,500 yuan, and so it is not worth staying here any longer. (Interview 1)

5.4 Decline in people smuggling and illegal entry

The evidence from our survey points to a trend of declining people-smuggling from China and illegal entry into UK. A number of interviewees report that more Chinese migrants are now able to use legal channels to come to the UK, while factors such as shifts in the exchange rates between sterling and the yuan are beginning to reduce demand from Chinese keen to pay people-smugglers (snakeheads) to bring them to the UK to work. As the snakeheads charge fees of £20-30,000 (Pieke and Xiang, 2007), their clients have to believe they stand a chance of paying off the fee and making a substantial amount of money for themselves within a relatively short space of time. Looking at the demand side, this quotation is taken from an irregular migrant worker who is opposed to his relatives and fellow villagers coming to the UK:

I do not want them to come out, as now in Britain it is not like before when it was easy to make more money than in China. For example I used to be paid £350 per week before the financial crisis and every month I could make £1,500-1,600, which equalled almost 300,000 yuan per year. But now I only can make £1,200 per month, less than 200,000 yuan per year. So I do not want my relatives to come out. (Interview 9)

On the supply side, it is becoming easier for Chinese nationals to come to the UK through legal channels (such as on a student or tourist visa), at a lower cost and less risk to their lives than if they put themselves in the hand of people-smugglers.

Furthermore, amongst the younger generation in traditional sending communities like Fuqing and Changle in Fujian province, both the “Dover” and “Morecambe Bay” tragedies in 2000 and 2004 have indeed changed their perceptions of international migration. Many Fujianese interviewees mentioned to us that it is not worth risking their lives with people-smuggling operations: Below is a comment from a Fujianese migrant worker who has just set up his business:

Because of the financial crisis, the British government wants to attract more Chinese students to study in the UK, and so it is much easier now for Fujianese young people to apply for a student visa to come to the UK. As a result, most Fujianese young people now don't need to be smuggled into the UK. Two years ago my eldest son came to the UK to study, which cost around 200,000 yuan for arranging a student visa. Now the price for a student visa has come down to 100,000 yuan. Young people are so lucky now that they do not need to risk their lives to get smuggled abroad. However, I am concerned that the young people who haven't had a chance to experience hardships like the last generation might not cherish the chance to go abroad any more. Now my daughter is 14 years old. Last time I called home, I heard that she is now working part-time during the summer holidays in a small factory. She told me she works very hard the whole day and only makes 20 yuan a day, but I think it is a very good chance for her to experience hardship, and then with this experience she will work hard on her studies later. We Fujianese people have a tradition of being able to bear hardship, and so you see lots of Fuqing and Changle people coming to the UK. They contribute their young lives in a foreign country and then go back home when they are old. (Interview 33)

It should be noted that although easier access to the UK on

legitimate student or tourist visas and a reduction in the appeal of irregular employment may have reduced the number of migrants paying people-smugglers to bring them to the UK, people trafficking from China seems to be increasing. The key to the definition of trafficking is exploitation, which can take the form of forced labour or domestic servitude as well as sexual exploitation, although the latter is the most common form of exploitation to which trafficked women and girls from China are subject in the UK. Exploitation can occur in the PRC once they are under the trafficker's control and en route to the UK as well as on arrival (Sheehan, 2009). Trafficking is defined in the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings as "the action of recruitment, movement or receipt of a person by coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation, such as prostitution, slavery or forced labour." The significant term here is "deception"; while domestic trafficking victims in China, including children and women sold as wives, are sometimes forcibly abducted, for transnational trafficking, the victims almost always depart willingly in the belief that they are being smuggled to a place where their life will be better. The deception occurs where the trafficker transports them either without being paid in advance, or having taken a much smaller fee that would usually be required for transit from China to the UK, with the intention of making up the difference by exploiting the trafficked person at the destination. This makes the distinction between people-smugglers and traffickers rather an artificial one, since the same people engage in both types of operation (Schloenhardt, 2001). Given that people-smugglers can demand £20,000 or more for passage from China to the UK, the only way in which they can expect to make their money back from a victim of trafficking in a reasonable period of time is by exploiting them, given the relatively low education and skill level and earning potential of the average victim. People trafficking is highly profitable, but from the juxtaposition of reduced custom for people-smugglers and an increase in trafficking, it is possible

that networks which previously focused mainly on smuggling willing clients able to pay their high fees are actually shifting towards mainly trafficking duped victims who have no idea that the little they have paid to leave China will be topped up through exploitation at the hands of their traffickers.

5.5 The supply of “full-time student workers”

With shortages in the supply of documented migrant workers, Chinese students have become a major way for employers to fill the gap. The category of Chinese students has turned out to be more complex than we initially thought. In our observations and interviews, we came across a number of Chinese students working full-time (many Chinese students of course work part-time, as their visa status entitles them to do), who had little or no actual study experience in the UK. We call these “full time student-workers”; they have come in on a student visa, but have not in fact stayed on the course they were supposed to follow at a university, college or language school. However, these are not simply “bogus” students in every case who only want to come to the UK to work. Some give up their studies temporarily because the money on offer for working is too good to turn down, and some even use spells of work between courses to fund the tuition fees for the next phase of their education or professional training. The dialogue below offers an insight into this type of Chinese worker:

Q: What about your relationship with the counter worker?

A: Well, the counter worker is always female. At the very beginning of my business, I hired a counter worker who is from my hometown (Fuqing, Fujian Province). She has worked at my restaurant for over 3 years.

Q: How did she come to UK? As a student, or the other ways?

A: She came here to study for her MA. She has not finished her studies but prefers to work in Chinese restaurants.

Q: How did you know her and get her to work with you?

A: Well, I had worked with her in a restaurant in the past. I knew her very well.

Q: Oh I see. But why did she leave your restaurant?

A: Because she had no legal status to stay in the UK as she was a student.

Q: As you said just now she has given up her studies, and so she should have her legal status to work with a full-time job.

A: Yeah, you are right; her visa had expired two years ago, but she did not get an extension, so she had become a person without visa or legal status.

Q: Oh I see. Now I can understand her situation.

A: One day she told me she needed to hide somewhere as policemen often came to my restaurant to check workers' status.

Q: And you agreed with her, right?

A: I had no way.

Q: Why did you not help her hide when the policemen came?

A: I'd love to, but they often come to my restaurant without any notice.

Q: Oh I see. Then where is she now?

A: Last year, she phoned me and said she wanted to come back to my restaurant.

Q: You agreed?

A: No, I did not agree.

Q: Why?

A: Because I hired another girl after she had gone.

Q: So what about your current counter worker?

A: She is a legal one with a valid visa for 4 years, as she was an undergraduate student.

Q: Did she give up her studies?

A: Yeah, she has given up her studies to work at my restaurant as full-time employee.

Q: Where is she from?

A: She is from Heilongjiang. (Interview 30)

A Chinese restaurant manager also recounted his own experience of being a “full time student-worker”:

A: I came here to finish my final year of studies at university. After my undergraduate studies, I went to travel in Europe for several months by myself; and then I applied for a student visa on an ACCA (accounting) course in 200. I did not go to class but worked in a manufacturing factory for 6 to 7 months to earn money. At that time I was the first Chinese worker in that factory and I became a “full time student-worker”, and as the job was very tiring, lots of workers quit soon. So the factory was happy to have me because I worked there full time but got part-time pay rates. I did not quit as it helped me to save a large amount of money for my future Masters course.

Q: How was your pay rate in that factory? What experience did you have there?

A: I was paid quite well, but also I was charged a lot in tax, as I did not dare to claim a tax rebate or reduction because of my student visa. I was afraid that the Home Office would find out about it and would not issue my future student visa. My hourly pay was £5.50, 1.5 times hourly pay on Saturdays and 2 times hourly pay on Sundays. I made lots of money, roughly £6,000-£7,000 after paying around £4,000 on N.I. and tax. At this moment if a student earns over £97 per week, he needs to pay tax, but do you know what I have earned each week? I made over £300 a week, so I do not dare to claim tax back with my student visa. (Interview 3)

Some students had overstayed their visa terms expecting to be able to regularise their status once they began a new course or started work, believing that a short overstay period of a week or two would not matter, and were shocked to find themselves subject to deportation proceedings. Despite their advantage in English-language ability, students could also be naïve in their reliance on unreliable organizations offering visa services in the UK.

6. Working Conditions and Impacts on Health

Working conditions tend to be particularly poor for irregular Chinese migrant workers. Moreover, we have found in this research that Chinese migrant workers with regular legal status can also be subjected to bonded labour or labour exploitation. This section aims to examine the scope and dimension of coerced labour in the UK, as well as looking at the consequences of poor working conditions, long hours and stress for the health of Chinese migrant workers.

6.1 Deterioration in working conditions

As with the overall impact of the economic recession on the Chinese catering sector, it has had a mixed effect on the working conditions of legal migrant workers. Higher demand for legal workers, given the lower supply of undocumented migrants and the increased police and UKBA scrutiny of Chinese workplaces for immigration violations, has resulted in higher rates of pay for some legal migrant workers. However, falling profits in the catering sector have simultaneously limited the amount of wages which even legal workers can demand, as well as sometimes increasing the hours they have to work and compelling them to undertake tasks which would previously

have been outside their skilled job descriptions. Moreover, legal workers who have gained entry to the UK in order to take up a specific job are only allowed a period of 28 days in which to find a new employer if they leave that job. A number of our informants with legal status told us that many employers were aware of the 28-day rule, and would simply wait it out in order to force a legal worker to accept an offer of lower pay. Thus if they tried to change jobs in order to improve their pay and conditions, the effort often had the opposite effect. These work-permit holders were often only sticking out low-paid work for long hours until they would be eligible for permanent resident (PR) status. We will return to the problems of unscrupulous employers and brokers manipulating workers through control of their immigration status and travel documents below. Turning to irregular migrants, it is commonly acknowledged that their working conditions have worsened in recent years, not only in terms of reduced pay, but also in increased instances of unfair treatment. Below is a case of declining pay:

Influenced by the crisis, wages are lower than before, and now everyone thinks just having a job is better than doing nothing. So they just say they have to put up with the lower wages. But the chefs with special expertise are still on the same wages. The newcomers, who are from mainland China, without any cooking skills and prior experience, where before they might have got a job in a restaurant at £180 per week, now can only get £160 instead. (Interview 4)

Poor working conditions are not limited to low pay rates, but also include an obligation to work without any rest or breaks. Below is an account of the case of an irregular worker who discussed her experience of continuous work for ten months without a day off even when she was suffering from an illness:

In my first job in a previous restaurant I was only paid

£400 per month as the boss said I had no relevant work experience at all. The working hours there were really long, without any day off each month. I used to get up at 10 or 10.30 am to start preparation work, then kept working all day, and when I finished cleaning work it was usually 1-2 am in the morning already. After one month, I asked my boss to raise my salary, or I else I would go back home to China. After discussing with her husband, she told me they decided to pay me £500 per month, but would keep £100 per month as a deposit from my £500 salary. I strongly disagreed with that. She refused to give me any more explanation, and so I said, you must give me the full amount of my salary every month, or I will call the police. Therefore, she had to pay me my full salary. Another thing I will never forget is that one day I got a serious headache, but the boss refused me to let me have one day's leave. When I asked her why, she answered with no reason, you just have to keep working. I shouted at her: "Do you know how long I have not had a day off? 10 months! I have not had one day off in ten months, and today because of this I had a very serious headache, which I could not bear, and that is why I ask you to give me one day off!" Nobody in the restaurant dared to say that to her, but I am the kind of person who always makes complaints directly without any fear. After that around midday, she asked me to have a rest, and I said no, as half the day is already gone, and I feel a bit better now. (Interview 1)

It is a mistake to assume that poor working conditions and ill-treatment by employers affect only irregular migrant workers. For many new migrants who entered the UK through legal channels, working conditions were also poor compared with those in China. Below is a comment from a Chinese chef who is a work-permit holder:

Now the workload in kitchens in the UK is very heavy. Every

migrant worker has to use their whole physical strength to do the work every day. It is not like in China; for example, in our restaurant there, there were more 100 people working in the kitchen., If you were washing dishes, you were just in charge of the washing work, and if you were doing the cutting and preparation of fish and vegetables, you were just doing that kind of work, and nobody could ask you to do all kinds of other work as well. In the UK, working in a buffet is even harder for the staff. For example, I knew a buffet in Manchester which made £50,000 per week. Do you know what this means? It means your entire working day is spent cutting 200 ducks into pieces. This is not work for a human being. You work to save money for your coffin. After you have been boiling rib soups or duck soups for a whole day, a person is tortured to death. However, in the UK, everyone just risks their lives to do the work. I told my former colleagues that I was suffering really badly, and even doing the washing-up as well. (Interview 17)

6.2 Labour exploitation of work-permit holders: the story of a Chinese doctor

A significant finding of our survey is that many holders of work permits can also be subjected to labour exploitation. It is well-known that for the same job in a Chinese restaurant such as a chef, different people can receive very different pay rates because of differences in immigration status.

“For example, if I were a PR holder, my pay rate would be £600 per week as a chef. A work-permit holder is only paid £300 per week, whereas an illegal worker gets no more than £200 per week.” (Interview 9)

The difference in pay rates between PR holders and work–

permit holders is, furthermore, related to the bonding of work-permit holders to their employers, a situation which is not easy to change. As a result, work-permit holders have to accept virtually any kind of working conditions, despite a shortage of qualified chefs in the Chinese catering sector, as they cannot choose to move to another employer without jeopardising their immigration status. This reinforces the point made above about the inflexibility of the system for work-permit holders tied to a specific employer, where the short period of time permitted between jobs tends to leave migrants trying to escape one unsatisfactory post having to accept a worse one as their 28 days runs out and they are forced to accept any offer of employment,

Compared with their counterparts in the catering sector, the working environment in the TCM sector has deteriorated even more following a recession-related drop in business and increase in the supply of TCM doctors in the UK. Given such a background, not surprisingly, many Chinese doctors feel working conditions are getting worse and becoming unacceptable, with many even suffering from severe labour exploitation. Below is a true story from the TCM sector:

I was invited to join this company in 2004 when they gave me an English contract to sign. Nobody explained it or drew my attention to any particular item. Later I understood that in the contract I was supposed to work 8 hours per day and 26 days a month. But actually I work every day throughout the year and have only one day off, which is 25th December. Every day I work 8.5 hours, which is 0.5 hour more than the contract says, and I get no overtime pay. You can calculate how large an amount of time this is, and the money I'm missing out on. It is labour exploitation.

When I first came to work in this shop four years ago, there was one receptionist doing the interpreting and acting as

a book-keeper too. The revenue target then was □1800/week. Soon, the target increased to □2800/week. My bonus was very little, though as a doctor I am the key person who actually played the paramount role in achieving the revenue increase. The bonus was calculated on the basis of 1% of the increased sum - it's a very poor bonus. More and more clients come seeking my services. Usually, one doctor can receive a maximum of 5 to 8 clients a day for treatment, which includes consultation, acupuncture, and massage. Sometime I received 18-19 clients daily. More receptionists were recruited - four of them where at first there had been only one. You can imagine how busy it was.

There is no lunch break and I can hardly rest at all. As my skill is high and I work diligently, the income of the business has increased dramatically. Every time the income jumps, the manageress sets me a new sales target. Over the past four years of work, the manageress has given me different targets for sales and service profit. The original target was □1800/week, then I developed takings to □2800/week. To push me to work harder, she set me target of □3750/week and now the new target is □4500/week. I once asked the manageress to increase my salary bit since I had made a great contribution to the business, and the answer was no. To give us a lesson about asking for salary increases, she further put my wife (who worked in a different shop in another city) in a difficult situation. She did this to tell us to forget the idea of salary increases and just work hard.

I am angry and exhausted, but I have had to internalize all this anger and tiredness day after day over these years. All my hard work and suffering experienced in these years earned me a Permanent Residence Permit (PRP). When I received the PRP, I decided to quit in due course and free myself from this inhuman management and colleagues.

Finally, I can breathe well, sleep well and relax. (Interview 18)

6.3 Abusive employers

For Chinese migrant workers, poor working conditions do not merely mean long working hours and low pay, but also include a lack of respect and appreciation for their labour, hard work and personal dignity. From this perspective, the behaviour of some employers recounted by our informants is unacceptable. As an interviewee pinpointed: "Money is not the main determinant for a good workplace. A good boss should be easy to communicate with and treat everybody in the shop in a fair way" (Interview 28). Below are quotes from a Chinese chef who spoke about how bad the behaviour of his restaurant boss was:

I have worked in this restaurant for two years. Some may regard it as the best Chinese restaurant in this area but our working conditions are terrible. First of all, the boss is not nice to us employees. He often shouts at us for no reason. In his mind, he is an upper class businessman, flying between Shenzhen, Hong Kong and the UK, holding a golf club card and meeting local council members. He always behaves like a minion in front of the local British, but like a master in front of us. For example, he one day shouted at a colleague of mine:

"What are you doing here? Have you finished all the jobs I have asked you to do? You just stand here like a stupid lump of wood!!

OK, I understand. I will finish it soon.

O what k? I have not finished my words. You say you have understood what I am going to say. I even do not know what I am going to say.

Or, if you just keep silent, the boss will shout at you in different words:

“What are you doing here? I have said so many words. You just keep silent as if your old Mum has died. Can you give me some response to show that you are alive? Can you understand me?”

In a situation like this, all the people in the kitchen will shut up. When the boss leaves the kitchen, every one here will feel relieved.

The second thing in this restaurant is low salary. I can earn around £210 a week, but I have to work at least 60 hours. Every day, I have to stand in the kitchen for 10 hours, doing my jobs and helping others. Working in the hot kitchen is like enduring a burning hell. Even in the cold winter, my shirt will be wet with sweat. Besides that, standing for long hours is terrible. Sometimes, I cannot walk down the stairs after working.

Some bosses will kick you out immediately once you are ill. Some bosses show little mercy. They give you at most two weeks to recover. If you are still unable to work, the boss will kick you out. No matter whether the boss is merciful or not, he will not pay for your medical treatment. You know, the boss can find someone else to replace my position very soon. Now I am afraid that I will be one of the ones who is kicked out sooner or later.

Normally, I have one day off on a Sunday. However, I have to go back to work if the restaurant is busy. To my mind, I think I am paying money to buy permanent residence status. I think that my boss is squeezing the last of my sweat. I have

to work with him; I have no way out as long as I am hoping to obtain a Green Card. In the financial crisis, it is hard for us to find another restaurant. Also, I have paid £2000 to extend my work permit in this restaurant. I have to earn my money back. Once I obtain the Green Card, I will quit and leave this environment. I am no longer young. I do not want to die here. (Interview 25)

6.4 Fatigue, health and medical needs

Long working hours and poor working conditions have negative impacts on the health of Chinese migrant workers both physically and psychologically. During the survey research, we were concerned that so many interviewees spontaneously mentioned the deterioration of their physical or mental health, feelings of hopelessness in themselves and other migrants, and even the deaths of their colleagues. In particular, we were concerned about the extent to which poor working conditions adversely influence the physical and mental health of Chinese migrant workers; the mismatch between the medical needs of Chinese migrants, in particular irregular migrant workers, and available, accessible public support systems such as the NHS; and what strategies and methods were adopted to cope with such challenges. Although we do not claim to provide a comprehensive account of these issues due to the constraints of time and the scale of the survey, nonetheless, the following cases may provide some clues to the scope and severity of the above problems.

Case 1: Chronic illness

I have heard that some people have suffered severe sciatica pain due to spending a long time standing. If someone gets this pain, it is impossible for him to carry on with work.

To make the situation worse, we do not know how to get medical support from the local hospital. If we are ill, we have to lie on the bed, hoping that our condition will get better by itself... But it does not always happen. For problems like sciatica pain, you have to ask a doctor for help. The pain will not go away automatically. Also, if the pain carries on, a mature male labourer will not be able to work any more. I have been in the UK for 5 years, and I have seen many cases like this. Once, I heard that one of my friends had to walk around bent double after suffering sciatica pain. He cannot get better without surgery. But it is becoming impossible as long as he is in the UK. He cannot afford the costs, which are around £10,000. Otherwise, he has to stay on the long waiting list for around 3 years before receiving free surgery in the NHS system. He has another option, which is going back to China. Obviously, he will not take this option yet, as he has not made enough money (Interview 25).

Case 2 Fatigue and mortality

In Manchester I saw two guys who died in the kitchen; one was from Guangzhou, another was from Malaysia. It could be because of gambling in the casino too much, working too long hours, and some heart problems due to long-term hard work and exhaustion. For example, a Malaysian guy in Birmingham died after gambling the whole night through. Actually I think here people are working very hard... The guy from Guangzhou that I mentioned, who died in the kitchen; he died from overwork over a long period of time--he weighed only 90 kilograms, very skinny, and he died of overwork. (Interview 17)

Case 3 Health conditions of Fujianese migrants

I am personally rarely ill; only occasionally I got a cold, and then I took some medicine posted from home, and most of my friends did the same. However, I was very sad when my good friend died in 2004 due to lung cancer. When he died he was still working in the kitchen. He kept complaining about his stomach ache, he was taking some medicine from home, and he did not realize it was lung cancer. All Fujianese men, if you look at them ... you will find 9 out of 10 Fujianese men are very skinny or thin, do you know what the problem is? It is here, the mental problems, stress and depression. Moreover, money cannot buy kindness and cannot stop the emptiness they feel in their hearts. So I concluded that we were suffering mental anguish, from being beaten, corruption and also from struggling so hard. Now I have nothing left. (Interview 14)

Case 4: Dilemma for health care for a disabled worker

A: Lao Fang, now 57, is an irregular migrant worker from Liaoning Province. We know each other as my parents' home is also his home town and he introduced me for a job in Glasgow a couple of years ago. Lao Fang used to be the chief of a bureau in a local Chinese government before migration. One day when he was washing dishes in the kitchen, he suddenly felt dizzy and fell down on the ground. The other Fujianese told me later they immediately looked for the boss, but it was already too late, as a blood vessel in his brain was broken, and he was sent to hospital. After Lao Fang had been in hospital for a period of time, there was no obvious sign of recovery.

Q: Did his family know what had happened?

A: Yes, the boss through other contacts called his family, and Lao Fang's wife said as it happened in your restaurant, you need to give us compensation of about 1 million yuan. The boss answered that this was impossible and the amount she had asked for was sky high.

Q: What was the final result ?

A: No result till now. It happened between 2007 and 2008, but as far as I know it is still being discussed.

Q: What about Lao Fang?

A: When I recall it, I really want to cry... later the hospital stopped giving him medicine, and he was transferred to a Chinese nursing home. As a result of his cerebral thrombosis, Lao Fang has hemiplegia and also he cannot speak clearly. When I visited him the very first time, Lao Fang cried as nobody visited him, his hair was long and in summer he was still wearing leather shoes instead of slippers. I asked the woman in charge of the nursing house, who is a Hong Kong lady, to look after him well, and the next time I visited him, his hair and beard was cut short, his finger nails were cut also. This shows that if he has relatives or friends caring for him, he can be looked after more carefully. His wife was crying on the phone with me, as she was struggling with the application to come here. She told me Lao Fang did not transfer much money back home, so if she wanted her son to come here to visit Lao Fang, they have to go into debt, and her son has tried many different ways, but failed.

Q: Was it the boss who found this Chinese nursing home for Lao Fang?

A: No, the local hospital has contact with the Chinese nursing home. The boss never even visited there, which I thought was not right. Later I even discussed it with the

person in charge of Chinese nursing home. She said that they just tried their best to look after him, and when he wants to go home, she can apply to the local government for the funding to buy him a wheelchair and an airline ticket and even arrange for two people to accompany him home, but you need to tell us his address. After I told his wife, she answered “if he was sent back home, I could not have any money to claim. That is why I could not give Lao Fang’s real address in China to the nursing home”. But I think no matter in which country, such as in China or Britain, Lao Fang should be compensated from the some welfare organisations as his family has no money to support him for the rest of his life. (Interview 10)

7. Migration Journeys and Labour Brokerage

The shifts in the Chinese labour market and China-UK migration patterns cannot be fully understood without taking into account the roles and working mechanisms of labour brokers in both the UK and China. As intermediaries between Chinese employers and migrant workers, labour brokers play crucial roles not only in meeting the needs of both sides, but also in influencing or even determining the contracted and actual working conditions of Chinese migrant workers. This is particularly true for work-permit holders, who will have been matched with a particular employer by a labour broker and will be tied to that employer as a condition of their work-permit. Based upon the information collected in this survey, this section addresses the questions: how important is the labour broker for a Chinese migrant seeking employment in the UK? What services do they provide and what fees do they charge? What are the consequences of using a labour broker for the pay and working conditions of Chinese migrant workers, in particular work-permit holders? It must be remembered that most of the information gathered

(except in one case) in this survey comes from interviews with Chinese migrant workers rather than labour brokers themselves; therefore, a certain caution should be exercised given the nature of preliminary findings in this area.

7.1 Different journeys to the UK

As with migration from other parts of the world, the journey from China to the UK can be an arduous one, and migrants' experiences and stories of their journey from home vary. As was mentioned earlier, there is a trend for easier legal migration to the UK in recent years, and migration is also becoming less expensive compared with five or ten years ago when many more Chinese, especially from Fujian, relied on people-smugglers or "snakeheads" and risked their lives in months-long journeys to realise their dreams of working in the UK. Despite easier legal migration for some, the points-based immigration system in the UK still disadvantages low-skilled and unskilled workers, and the lack of an open, regularised migration channel for these migrants means that their journeys remain complex and often risky. Here we share some of their stories.

Case 1: Same destination but different costs

Mr. Wang came from Fujian four years ago. His journey to the UK cost his family 280,000 yuan, taking almost one year. By contrast, his wife, Ms. Huang, came to the UK two years later, with her trip costing only 100,000 yuan as her mum knew the "snakehead" very well, so her family just had to pay the cost of travel. Her journey took only five to six days, including two days travelling a lorry from France to the UK (Interview 26).

Case 2: An international journey before entering UK

Mr. Liang, a 45-year-old from Fujian and a PR holder, was in France for half a year before he got to the UK. Before he came to the UK in 2001, he paid a “snakehead” about 120,000 yuan to go to France first, from where he then flew to Johannesburg (South Africa) and Maputo (Mozambique) with his photo inserted into a legal passport and a legal business visa. He then flew back to France to work in garment factories. During that period in France, he had problems with gangsters who were supported by Wenzhounese [who tend to dominate Chinese involvement in the garment business in Europe]. All suffered extortion even though they came from the same native place in China. One of his friends had his fingers cut because he refused to pay extortion money. Mr. Liang was scared and escaped to the UK after paying a “snakehead” 60,000 Francs, travelling along with seven other stowaways. Mr. Liang came to England in 2001, won a lawsuit against the Home Office and got a four-year special working visa in 2002, during which period he was not allowed to leave Britain. He got his Permanent Residency in 2006, brought his whole family to the UK two years ago, and set up a family business last year. (Interview 27)

Case 3: “I cannot believe how my former student treated me”

Mr. Liu, a 38-year-old work-permit holder from Dongbei, has worked in the UK for three and a half years. Before migrating to the UK, he was a teacher in a vocational training school specialised in cooking. He had also worked in Russia and Finland for two years as a kitchen manager. His journey to the UK began when a former student of his who had migrated to the UK earlier offered him information about a good job opportunity with better pay in the UK. For the cost of migration, he was told he only needed to pay £5,000 to cover everything. During the process of migration, however, the agency first charged him a deposit of £3,000, then another £5,000 to apply for a work

permit, and finally another £7,000 for getting the work permit documents to the airport when he arrived in the UK. So he was charged a total of £17,000 to come and work here. Furthermore, his wage turned out to be much less than what he was told. He was very angry about this and argued with his former student. Eventually he was refunded around £2000. The student had himself been ripped off by the same labour broker, and performed the same scam on his former teacher as a way of making some of his own money back, introducing the teacher to the broker for a cut of the inflated fee that Mr Liu was charged. (Interview 17) This shows that even the preferred method of finding work for most Chinese, using the recommendation of a friend, classmate or home-town mate, does not always protect a migrant from exploitation and deception.

Case 4: risk even before migrant journey

While I was preparing my journey to the UK in 2004, I had this experience in dealing with migration agencies. I went to one agency and paid them a 70,000 yuan agency fee, but I worried they might cheat me. So I invited one staff member out to have dinner with me. During dinner, I showed him a knife to force him tell the truth about the agency. He had to admit that the agency was not reliable and had some tricks to cheat customers out of their money. So the best I could do was to take my immigration fee back from the agency and go to find another one. One of my son's friend's fathers was not that lucky. He was cheated by the agency out of 40,000 yuan and never managed to come to the UK. After I took out my money from the first agency, I heard another agency had a successful track record of helping two people to go abroad, so I turned to them and paid a 75,000 yuan agency fee in 2004 for a business visa to enter the UK for a six month visit. (Interview 16)

7.2 Labour brokerage as a sector of the ethnic economy in the UK

Although many interviewees spoke of labour brokers and paying an “introduction fee” for jobs, it seems labour broking is a far from mature business as its coverage and function vary greatly across sectors, geographic locations, migration experience and social networks. It is a very common practice to charge an introduction fee of up to one week’s wages for a job regardless of how long or short the job is to last, and individual migrant workers who do not specialise in labour broking charge each other this kind of fee for introductions in an informal system of exchanging information about opportunities for mutual benefit. Sometimes, the introduction fees may be difficult to distinguish from the kind of “gifts” which in Chinese culture are often used to show appreciation and thanks to intermediaries for their help, with the gift’s value depending on the value of the help and the person’s ability to afford the gifts. At the other end of the spectrum, some specialist labour brokers may ally with employers to monopolise the labour market. In the case of e.g. solicitors, they might provide contracts for workers in English, which most cannot read, and use leverage such as retaining workers’ passports to enforce worse pay and conditions than were originally agreed with the worker. Some labour brokerage agencies are simply operations of organized crime, such as the Fujianese gang controlling the supply of factory workers in East Anglia mentioned by two of our informants, who make their money by taking an introduction fee every time a worker is placed in a different factory, and also by charging migrant workers excessive amounts for cramped shared accommodation. The gang’s reputation for violent retribution against uncooperative workers keeps migrants from resisting their demands, especially those who have just arrived in the UK and have no other connections to use to find work

or accommodation. Job hunters from China can thus become victims of labour abuse and exploitation by brokers as well as by employers themselves. Below are cases which show the complexity of Chinese labour brokerage in the UK.

Case 1: What I know about labour brokers

Q: How did you find the different jobs? Was it through friends' introductions?

A: Some jobs were introduced by friends or people in my home region who knew how to get smuggled into the UK. Before, when I was not familiar with them, they did charge me an introduction fee, which was usually £100-200, or one week's wages; in recent years the introduction fee has been reduced to £70-80, I guess because more people are acting as labour brokers, so there is more competition, and the introduction fee has to be lowered to attract more customers. I was charged by a Chinese labour broker around £70-80 several years ago in other places for being introduced to jobs. Later some friends introduced jobs for me. If they were too timid to ask for introduction fees, I bought them two packs of cigarettes, as I did not want to owe them any debt of gratitude.

Q: Did you hear any story about labour brokers cheating customers?

A: I heard of a few cases, such as one of my friends when he had just arrived in London, he was introduced to work in a takeaway. He worked very hard but still the boss said he was not good enough and then fired him after a period of time. However, he had paid the introduction fee already and it could not be refunded. (Interview 34)

Case 2: Job introduction fees and working environment

Mr. Wu is an irregular migrant from Fuqing with three years of work experience in the UK. Nowadays, Wu has about 20 relatives and friends working in the UK. According to him, if people want to get a job from the job agency, they usually need to pay about £100 first. But if they look for the job with the help of a friend or relative, £50 will normally be enough. It seems that people from the same region take care of one another when they are abroad. But according to him, he might be earning a higher wage working for Hong Kong bosses rather than Fujianese ones. If the business is good, an employee of the restaurant can be a boss in around five years. (Interview 28)

Case 3: My experience in British food processing factories

A: The first stop for my work was a small town near Cambridge, where I worked for 8-9 months. At that time, I worked in a British factory. I worked 3-4 days a week, which meant that the most money I made was £90-£120 a week. The factories I worked in were chicken factories and a packaging factory. When I arrived there in 2003, I paid a £200 introduction fee to a Fujianese agent, which was only valid for introducing one job, and it lasted only two weeks. My job was loading and unloading cargo. It was really hard. I had to lift around 35 to 40 tons a day. The boss would then pay me £30 a day. If I wanted to get another job, I had to pay another £200 to them. Then, if I wanted to find another new job, I had to pay the labour broker for the intermediation again. This time, it was £100 cheaper than the first time, but at the same time the duration of my working week was also reduced gradually. For instance, the first week we worked for 5 days, the second week we worked for 4 days, and then 2-3 days a week. At that time, I did not have any friends here and was heavily dependent upon the agents to continue to work in British factories. These labour brokers do not need to work as they just

make profit on each Chinese worker, such as £10-£20 from each worker, and then they can make £200 per day easily. They are gang members, and there are many gangs in UK. Especially in this small town, the Fujianese gang controlled the Chinese workers. We were all just arriving in UK and we were warned they were very ruthless, which made us very scared and we just obeyed them.

Q: Did the labour brokers provide free accommodation for you?

A: No. we had to pay £25 per person per week for accommodation in very poor conditions. In a very small room there were 8 to 9 people living together. Sometimes we divided into two halves – one side for the men, and the other side for women in this small room. I saw in one small room a man was sleeping with his temporary female partner and at the same time the other males were sharing the same tiny room, so I thought it was like a “dog house”. So during my first 7 months in UK, I did not make any money, I even spent all my savings, £1000. (Interview 16)

7.3 Diversification of labour brokerage in China: experience of a British labour broker

Accounts of labour exploitation come not only from irregular migrants, but also from skilled workers recruited and transferred through legal channels from China to the UK. In this regard, the working mechanisms between Chinese and British labour brokers need to be closely scrutinised. Here, a former British agent offers an insight into the nature and impact of the deregulation of Chinese labour brokers on the working conditions of work-permit holders in the UK.

Ms. Li has British citizenship. She left China in 1991 and lived in South Africa for eight years before entering the UK in 1999.

Now she owns a small business selling Chinese feng shui and calligraphy products and Buddha Statues in a town centre. Below is a conversation between her and a survey interviewer:

A: After settling down in the UK, I had the experience of establishing two companies: one was for student and professional migration, including introducing overseas Chinese students to study in UK, and nurses & doctors to work in the UK; the other one was a commercial firm, which introduced Chinese businessmen and firms to the UK market, and organised Chinese firms to trade fairs in the UK. I organised lots of trade fairs across the UK, in places like Manchester, London, and Birmingham. At that time, I had several big business partners in China, who were all incorporated in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. For example, if you wanted to introduce overseas Chinese students to study in Universities, I would first contact the admissions office of a selected University, and then in the meeting we would discuss how many students the University needed, what suitable courses the University had for these students, and what commission the University could offer to me if I introduced overseas students, which was around 10-15% of the agency fee.

Q: But why have you stopped your business and set up this stall? Was it related to the economic recession?

A: No. I decided to quit three years ago as I felt that being an agent was very tiring. So I decided to retire and enjoy the rest of my life. I started this stall business at the end of last year.

Q: What made you so tired?

A: All my partners in China had to be real incorporated companies with a minimum registered capital of 1 million yuan, or the Chinese partners would cheat the customers

or give me trouble while they were in the UK. For example, an overseas student coming to the UK to study needs to pay a minimum 20,000-30,000 yuan agency fee, which includes an airline ticket.

Q: I heard from many students that the agency charged them 80,000-90,000 yuan - why is the price so different?

A: They must have applied for student visas through a fraudulent agency, as I know you do not need that much money for a student visa. I never did that before. For example, if my agency applied for a student visa for a Chinese senior high school graduate, if he had not been working after graduation for 2 years, he would have to prove what he had done in those 2 years; or if he went to college in China after graduation from senior high school, he would also need to show proof that he had studied in a particular college. Through my agency I recruited nurses, doctors and teachers to work in the UK, and helped them to apply for work permits for 2 years.

Q: How much did they pay in agency fees if they applied for work permits through you?

A: Usually it was a minimum of 70,000-80,000 yuan in China. I charged very low agency fees, but I know of some agencies in China who charged customers a lot in agency fees, so that is why I signed a contract with my Chinese partners, as I did not want them to charge customers too high an amount, and then when they came to the UK, they would give me trouble later on.

Q: What trouble did you face before?

A: For example, if I charged one applicant £2,500, or £3,000, or £3,500 depending on his visa application, and then I did not allow my Chinese partners to charge him too

much money, such as 200,000 yuan, which would not have been reasonable. But from my previous experience I found that some Chinese partners charged our customers a lot of money secretly. For example, they asked other agencies to recruit workers, and then the subordinate agencies charged the workers some money to make profits, so in this way, finally the customer has to be charged around 100,000 yuan in agency fees for his work permit, but from this agency fee I only got £2,000 or £2,500. So when the customer arrived in the UK, I could not tell him how much I charged him. All I needed to do for my customers was to supply real work permits first; then secondly, when they arrived, I would meet them at the airport; thirdly, I would arrange the journey to the employers or accommodation. After all this had been done, I had nothing to do with the customers. However, some Chinese doctors came to me to complain that the employers were not good, and they wanted to change their jobs, I told them that I could not help them as they should feel lucky to have work permits to work here and work hard here (Interview 33).

7.4 Bonded labour amongst Chinese work-permit holders: several cases

We were very concerned to hear the account of a chef who claimed that the working conditions of work-permit (WP) holders were even worse than those of irregular migrant workers in the UK because of exploitation by labour brokers and employers. After a series of interviews with legal migrant workers without a permanent resident (PR) status in both the Chinese catering and TCM sectors, clearly, it seems that coerced labour is not limited to Chinese catering or individual WP holders, but rather is a serious issue to which UK government agencies, Chinese community and civil society

organisations should pay more attention. Despite the great variety of working conditions among different workplaces and employers, several common characteristics of coerced labour among them have emerged from our interviews.

Firstly, personal documents are taken at the beginning so that WP holders cannot contact any potential employers who may offer better working conditions and may also be qualified to apply a work-permit for the employee. One of our more savvy informants who had worked abroad before refused to hand his passport to the broker or his employer, but most do so without question. Furthermore, it is even more common to find an employer taking a large deposit either at the beginning of the employment or withholding a proportion of employees' wages. More threatening than either of these measures is the possibility of losing a job altogether, as any employment gap or job discontinuity means the end of their dream of gaining PR status. The following cases will illustrate the above elements as well as the scope and severity of bonded labour among WP holders.

Case 1: The importance of not handing over a passport to an agency

At the arrival airport, I was asked to hand in my passport to the solicitor. I refused. I had learnt from my previous work experience in Russia that the one thing I should not ever lend to anyone was my passport. So I definitely did not give them my passport. I told the solicitor: you can call the police to send me back, but if you do this I will tell the police you charge me a lot of money as brokers, as it is illegal to charge customers money for introducing jobs in Britain. If I had been a bit weak at the airport, I would be controlled by them. For example, I knew a guy coming here to work for many years, but until now he can still only make 120 pounds per week as his documents are not in his own hands so that he is unable

to change his job even he is heavily bullied (Interview 17).

Case 2: Holding cash deposits as a means to control work permit holders

A: One of the reasons I wanted to change my first job was because the Hong Kong boss was dissatisfied with the work I did in the kitchen. He always criticized me rather than the Fujianese workers. As the latter did not have legal status, if the boss criticized them too much, they could quit and leave at any moment. However, work permit holders like me could not quit their job and leave freely; as we all know, if you want to change job, you need to find a suitable restaurant who can apply for work permit for you before you move, so as a work-permit holder, I was forced to work for the boss although the boss did not show respect for my work.

Q: Is this common among your work-permit-holder friends, and why?

A: Yes, it is quite common. I have some chef friends, who are working in Lincoln, Kent and Birmingham. When they arrived in the UK, the bosses firstly took a £5,000 deposit from each of them.

Q: How did the boss do that?

A: For example, if your wage is £250 or £220 per week, the boss just paid you £120 or £130 per week, and kept £100 every week for you. At the end of the first year there was around £5,000 in unpaid wages kept by the boss. They called it a “deposit”. When you had worked for the boss for 4 years, at the beginning of the fifth year, the boss would pay back £100 deposit to you every week, so that by the end of the fifth year the boss would have returned all your deposit.

Q: Do the “Deposit” terms needed to be signed and agreed in writing beforehand?

A: Yes, usually the boss will prepare two contracts for his employees. One is written in English for the Home Office, the other is written in Chinese. On each of them there are different terms and conditions for the employees, for example, firstly, the salary is different; on the contract for Home Office, the salary has to be the national minimum wage as a chef, but on the Chinese contract for the Chinese Chefs the salary is lower than the national minimum wage and the employees have to sign to agree to pay a £5,000 deposit, or the bosses will not apply for work permits for the employees (Interview 19).

Case 3 Surplus of Chinese doctors and bonded labour in UK

A: In the UK there are many Chinese doctors being maltreated. To my knowledge, two doctors who were going to be eligible to apply for PR status in two months time were fired. These malevolent employers had already exploited these doctors enough financially, psychologically and physically, and now the exploiters had taken away their last hope from their hard work in the UK. It is an inhuman and heart-breaking experience for these Chinese doctors. You know, a lot of doctors are working long hours and receive approximately £400-700/month.

Q: Couldn't you quit this employer and join in another one?

A: It's a similar situation in other places as well. In addition, there is surplus labour among Chinese doctors, with more in the UK now than are needed. Hence, this causes severe competition and a bad employment situation for them. There are about 2,000 managers and sub-managers

in the field of TCM in the UK. There are approximately 5,000-6,000 Chinese doctors in the UK labour market. Beside, each year, there are labour brokers who bring a lot of Chinese doctors to the UK regardless of the actual needs of the labour market here. The labour broker asks each one to pay 80,000 yuan (approximately £7,000) to come to the UK. Usually, labour brokers in China keep half for themselves and give the other half to the UK employer. There are ties between the employers and the labour brokers. As a result, Chinese doctors here become chess pieces played with so cruelly by their employers. Because of all these bad practices, Chinese doctors are living and working in a dreadful situation. They are exploited by their overseas Chinese clinic employers (Interview 18).

Case 4 Deficiencies in the UK migration management system

Q: Do you have friends working for their bosses for 4 or 5 years?

A: Not yet, many friends of mine have quit their jobs mid-way. As their wages in the first year are so low, you can imagine what it's like. Making £100 or £120 per week for most employees is too low. If they keep some money to live on in the UK, they can't save money for their family back in China. Last week one of my friends came to visit me from Birmingham. He told me he wanted to change his job and convert his work permit. By then his boss had already kept back from him over £2,000 in unpaid wages, and if he quit, he would not get it back; moreover, the bosses not only kept a £5,000 deposit, but also refused to raise the work-permit holders' wages. The bosses did exploit us very badly. And I have to say that from my experience, I think the bosses from mainland China are worse and more mean than Hong Kong bosses, as they regard themselves

as knowing what employment terms and conditions are in China, and they think they are doing their employees a big favour by applying for work permits for them. In order to prevent these employees from running away or suddenly quitting, they have invented many dreadful measures to deal with this. Actually, they apply for work permits for us while we are in China, and spend no money at all. They just use their rights as owners to apply for work permits for employees. However, through agencies they charge more money to us than if they were applying for work permits here. For example, if you apply for a work permit in the UK, it just costs you several hundred pounds. But in China they charged us a lot more than that. So in that case the owners are making money from applying for work permits for employees when they are in China. We know the bosses have exploited us, but when we have just arrived in this country, we don't dare to change jobs as we are too scared that we will lose our work permits. That was why I refused a job offer in London, which was £ 300 per week for my wages, and kept working for the first boss instead for £180 per week. I think many of my chef-friends faced a similar choice. Especially when we had just arrived in the UK as new migrant workers, we did not know any regulations and working laws about work permits. All we want to do is just not to lose our work permits, as we don't want to be illegal workers in the UK. Unfortunately, the bosses realise all too well what we are worried about and use it to control us tightly and exploit us badly (Interview 19).

7.5 A case of labour abuse against a Chinese doctor

The poor working conditions surrounding WP holders described in previous sections unsurprisingly have had a profound impact on the health of some migrant workers both physically and

psychologically. During one survey, we heard a recent very sad story regarding the abuse of a Chinese doctor resulting in mental disorder. When the case was subject to further investigation, it proved to offer an insight into the severity and consequences of labour abuse among Chinese WP holders. As is so often the case, in this situation, a highly skilled TCM practitioner was victimised in the workplace by intermediaries who had the English-language skills he lacked and the ear of the employer.

This is the tragic story of a young Chinese doctor who became schizophrenic. The male doctor, surnamed Pei, 36, came from Hunan province. He worked in a county hospital before migrating to the UK. He worked in a TCM shop in central London. The employer has two shops along the same street 400 metres apart from each other. One shop has no shower facilities, while the other has one in the basement. So the workers have to walk every day between the two shops to take their showers. Pei was not an out-going character who approached others easily. He was not talkative and concentrated only on his work during his shift.

There are two shifts in the shop. The morning shift is from 7.00-14.00; the evening shift lasts from 15.00-22.00 or until there are no more visits from clients. Pei worked on the morning shifts. Doctors are required to wear ties and suits during work. Once, after finishing his shift, Pei went to take a rest. But that day there were many clients and more doctors were needed. The receptionist/interpreter asked Pei to continue to work. Pei said it was his rest time and refused to work. The receptionist/interpreter said: "Are you coming up or not? I will report this to the manager." Pei was afraid they would tell the manager, so he got dressed and started working again. On another occasion, the manager visited the shop and asked: 'Who did not work hard and did not listen to the receptionist/interpreter?' The

receptionist/interpreter pointed to Pei and another doctor. The manager said “OK, you will be fined £ 1,000 each. Make sure you work hard.” So the doctors were fined £ 1,000. That is £ 1,000! We only earn that much in a good month. Additionally, Pei’s family (his wife and two children) are here. They need money to support their living costs in London. Everything is so expensive in London. Pei was angry and upset. But there was nowhere and nobody he could seek help from. He internalized all this anger and sadness.

The doctors were unable to rent a house, so they lived in the clinic. The manager charged them £ 120/a bed/month; £ 80/ a sleeping-bag/month. On another occasion, Pei finished his shift and went to the other shop for a shower. He dressed in a casual outfit after his shower and came back to his place. The manager happened to be there. Pei went back to the rest area, and the manager didn’t notice it was Pei, thinking he was a client. So the manager said to the receptionist/interpreter ‘why you don’t receive the client?’ The receptionist/interpreter replied “It’s Doctor Pei.” The manager started to exert his ‘power’ and abused Doctor Pei with all kinds of negative and hurtful words. Pei had no words to throw back at the manager. At the end of the verbal abuse, the manager said to him that he was fired. Doctor Pei suffered labour abuse and verbal abuse, and paid the fine of £ 1,000 without any good reason. He had his family with him, all living on his income. He was driven to weak health and absent-mindedness. One day, he was lighting a can, but he accidentally started a fire in the room. It wasn’t a big fire at first, but it grew. Soon, the firemen came and the police came as well. The police took Pei away for questioning. At the police station, the police wanted to ask him questions, and noticed his eyes were staring straight ahead. Obviously, there were mental problems, so the police sent him to a mental-health facility. It is said that the connection between Doctor Pei’s family members (the wife mainly) and outside have been cut off as the employer

does not wish the spread of this case.

8 Several Issues related to Chinese and British Communities

The issues identified in the previous sections, including labour abuse and what amounts to bonded labour of regular and irregular workers, cannot be attributed exclusively to the behaviour of ethnic entrepreneurs, or to factors associated with the economic recession. The findings of our survey suggest that many labour issues are actually related to intrinsic features of both the Chinese communities and, at times, British society. This section attempts to highlight several outstanding issues that have emerged from our survey and to identify their impacts on the working and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers. It discusses the following issues: discrimination between different Chinese regional groups; racism and anti-social behaviour; “protection fees” and organised crime; gang-master organisations; language and communication barriers; and debates about migration policies.

8.1 Discrimination between different Chinese regional groups

In the last decade or so, we have witnessed a rapid growth of the Chinese population in the UK on the one hand, and on the other hand, the increasing complexity and diversity of “new migrants” from China in terms of skills, education, region of origin, and migration status. Nonetheless, there has been a trend of increasing communication, interaction and interdependency in economic terms between established ethnic Chinese groups (e.g. Cantonese/Hong Kongers, Malaysian/Vietnamese Chinese) and new migrants (including Fujianese, Dongbeinese and others from mainland China). Owing to different backgrounds, traditions, values, identities,

migration experiences, working and living styles, however, we have also seen that there remain many tensions, prejudice, conflicts and misunderstandings between different Chinese groups, which it may be better to term “Chinese communities” rather than a single, unified “Chinese community”. In general, this phenomenon of diversity and tension is quite normal or inevitable, taking into account the short duration of interactions between the above groups and their increasingly common interests in economic, political and cultural terms. Nevertheless, our evidence shows that “regional discrimination” exists among Chinese communities in the UK and can lead to incidences of bullying, labour abuse or exploitation, incidences where the only difference between perpetrators and victims is their region of origin. Reviewing our survey data, we have found that “regional discrimination” is not only a good term to explain a large number of cases of labour exploitation and abuse, but also reflects the common language used by many interviewees to describe the behaviours of their counterparts from other Chinese groups. The following are several cases selected to illustrate the meaning and impacts of regional discrimination in practice.

Case 1: We want mutual respect for each other

A: To be honest, I have regretted coming here to the UK. I hate the way that the Hong Kong boss looked down upon us mainland Chinese.

Q: Why? What happened?

A: The boss bullied us all the time. During work the boss cursed us in dirty language, and the boss never treated us as human. Once a fire happened in our restaurant, I tried my very best and risked my own life to stamp out the fire, but in the end, he didn’t express any thanks to me. I didn’t expect any money as a reward, but at least he should have said “thank you” to me. This is the key

reason I left the last restaurant. So I didn't know whether I did right to stamp out the fire or not, but the restaurant at that moment was a brand new one with £50,000 in income per week, and I don't think the boss wanted to claim on his fire insurance... But I am sure I did not get any sense from him that he appreciated what I had done for him. For example, when my wife came to work there, she was paid £120 per week working from 10am to midnight, even so, the boss asked her to pay a £20 accommodation fee per week. My wife was very angry. We came here to work, just for making more money. We can bear all the hardships. However, I only want to be treated as a human being and to be appreciated. My life in the UK so far is not what I wanted, what I want is to be respected as a human being, a respectable Chinese. I had working experience in Russia where the boss treated us as human beings, inviting us to have dinner after work, and regular sports parties. Now why I am working in this restaurant is because the boss shows respect to me and treats me properly (Interview 17).

This interviewee explained that he tackled the fire because he was the only one, among mostly low-skilled and recently hired kitchen staff, who had been trained in which fire extinguishers to use for which type of fire. He used the correct extinguisher, but all the boss said to him when the fire was out was: "Who told you to use the most expensive extinguisher? Do you know how much it costs to refill?"

Case 2: Conflicts in the kitchen

Glasgow is a nice city but the staff in the kitchen were really not good. They all are from Fujian. All of them have only had 2-3 years of primary school education; their working style is really untrained, but they regard their own work very highly. For example, there is a rubbish bin in the kitchen which is

for solid rubbish. Can you pour waste water into the same rubbish bin? The waste water should be poured down the drain instead of into a rubbish bin bag. But they feel it is not a big deal to pour waste water into the rubbish bin bag, as they are not considerate of others. When I had to throw out the bin bag, it was always broken due to the water, which made it really hard for me to take it out. They are a group of very low quality people... I am not afraid that you will laugh at me, but when my friends in China asked me who I was working with, I told them I was working with a group of animals... I have to say they are all peasants. I used to be a manager in a factory in China, so now in the kitchen when they asked me to do things, I feel uncomfortable. How dare they ask me to do things! Can they write or add up? During the nine months I was working in Glasgow I only felt OK in the first 2 months, and in the remaining 7 months I had to force myself to work there. In the end I quit that job also. But the Hong Kong boss treated me well (Interview 10)

Case 3: Bullying amongst Chinese migrant workers

In my last restaurant, there were 11 workers including me, two Dongbeinese, one Shanghainese, and 8 Fujianese. The Fujianese are the most united group I have ever seen. For example, if one of Fujianese wants to start a takeaway, the other three Fujianese will not hesitate to lend him money to do that. One Dongbei guy is now very miserable as he kept being bullied by the Fujianese group.... They “borrow” money from him, and kept “borrowing” money from him -- more than £10,000 in all, to the point where he became really poor as he was bullied and cursed by them every day and had no choice. For example, the Fujianese ask to borrow money from him, let's say £500, and then when asked when the money can be returned, they will answer your money will be returned after we die. It is really torture

for him. (Interview 17)

Another example not quoted here contained racist views about other ethnic Chinese groups and highlighted the different cultural and religious outlook of Malaysian and mainland Chinese. The purpose of the above quotes are to offer not only evidence and insight into the nature of regional discrimination between Chinese groups in UK, but also the language and approaches used by interviewees to explain regional discriminations. One conclusion that can be drawn from the above quotes is that even victims themselves may have regional biases or discrimination in their minds which do little to resolve this issue, and can be barriers to community cohesion.

8.2 Racism and Anti-Social Behaviour

Discrimination or racism against Chinese migrants can hardly be termed a new issue, but many commentators expect hostility and violence against ethnic minorities to increase during a recession as foreign migrants are seen more than previously as unfairly cheap competitors for scarce jobs. Many of our interviewees expressed their concerns in this respect. Below is a quote from a Malaysian Chinese.

Case 1: How can I cope with racism and anti-social behaviour?

A: The business environment in Birmingham was really terrible. Some customers were very hostile. It was common to find young guys, white or black, just coming in and shouting at us: "Chinese pigs, get out of here. Get back to China".

Q: How about your retail business in this city?

A: My business is alright but the business environment is also not very good. I will tell you how hard it is. Firstly, the council tax and the utility bills keep rising. Last year, I had to pay £6,000 for council tax. This year, it has been raised to £6,500. The utility bills like gas and electricity have increased from £200 to £300 a week. You see, I paid this tax and many other costs. I still do not know how the government provides services to us. We still feel that we have been discriminated against. Once I did the delivery to one of my customers and parked the car in a place that I am not sure it is suitable to park in. Soon a traffic policeman came to me and shouted at me: move you car!!! At the same time, there was a white man doing the same the thing, parking the car improperly. He just came to that guy's place, politely asking him to move his car. What should I say? Should I argue with a policeman and, ask him to act like a gentleman? Another thing is assaults by local youths. When I newly opened this shop in 2007, it was quite common to have young men come in and say: "I do not like Chinese, you Chinese are pigs". Also, you may find that young men will even pee around your shop. My wife asked them not to do so. They would say: why not? Your Chinese shop is a toilet!! Sometimes, I will go out to drive them away. The next morning, I would be surprised to find that my shop window had been broken by stones. I reported this to the police. But there was no response from them. I went to the City Council again, asking for permission to install bars outside the shop to make sure that my windows would not be broken again. However, do you know how they replied to me? The City Council tells me that I can install the bars but only inside the shop rather than outside. My shop windows are still in a dangerous situation. The only thing that comforts me is that the bars which have been installed inside can make sure that things

will not be stolen if they break the window. (Interview 22).

Case 2: Escape from racist attacks

Q How about installing CCTV? Is that effective in dealing with those teenagers?

A: No way. I always called the police to my shop, and the police came to my shop so many times that they finally told me to be patient and put up with the abuse as they are teenagers, and even the police do not have any solution to deal with them. As my shop was on the ground floor, local residents were living upstairs. Once when my car was parked outside my shop, somebody threw a big stone from an upstairs window, and smashed my car from the top. I called the police, and while they were sorting out my report in my shop, the police car was smashed by a stone also.

Q: But when the harassment happened, did you look for local authorities or Chinese organisations to help?

A: I contacted the local Council. When they wanted me to pay the shop's annual rent, I explained to them: "Look, my business is here, but all these people gave me so much trouble, and my business has dropped off." So they gave me a whole year's free rent and did not charge me any rent for that year. You know, my shop windows were broken many times by those teenagers, and one even played with fire in my shop, and my younger brother fought with them and finally was sent to hospital, I told my brother to leave them alone and not to fight with them directly. I was scared my brother would be tortured by them, so I decided to sell my shop in the end. I bought that shop in 2002 and sold it in 2004, to a Fujianese. I'm ashamed to say that as when they asked me whether the area was alright to run the business, I told them that the area was not bad. Later I heard from one of my old customers that the Fujianese

owner who bought my shop was beaten by local bad guys as he was angry with the local teenage bullies and fought with them, and then the adult relatives of the teenagers came to beat him (Interview 31).

Case 3 My experience in coping with local hooligans

My friend introduced me to a job in Hereford. Since we know each other, there was no need for me to pay any intermediary fee to him. Hereford is a small town in the middle of England. Before I was there, the boss was always assaulted by the local young men. Beside this takeaway, there was a barber shop. When the shop was closing at the end of the day, those young men would go to the barber's shop to get a lot of hair. Then they would throw all the hair into our shop. The boss dared not to argue with those young men. When I was there, the situation was getting better. I look like the landlady's brother. When she showed me around the town to buy some stuff, I was soon known by others. One day, a young white guy sprayed a whole bottle of coke on my back. I was annoyed, so I fought back. You know what I was doing in China. There was no one daring to do such things to me. Soon, that guy was under my knee begging for help. The policemen were not far from us. They knew what had happened between us. Hence, if I just taught that guy a lesson to be polite, they would not stop me. If I did anything further, they would come to arrest me. Years of experience of dealing with policemen in China let me know when to stop. At the same time, that young man did not report me to the policeman. Since then, this small Chinese takeaway became very famous in that town. Eventually that young white guy was close to me. The other guys knew there was a new Chinese guy around the place, that he was the landlady's brother, and that he was tough because he knew how to fight. The result is that they started to be nice to

me (Interview 25).

8.3 “Protection fees”

Against the background of racist attacks and anti-social behaviour described in the previous section, it is understandable that vulnerable people may join together to defend their properties and businesses here. The absence of Chinese community organisations bearing the responsibility for protecting ethnic businesses and migrant workers means that some of these migrants may establish informal but active “organisations” to do something for group members. This has resulted in the emergence of many gang-type organisations in the UK on various scales and with various impacts on Chinese communities. How a Chinese gang organisation is established and operates exceeds the scope of this project. Nonetheless, many interviewees have mentioned such organisations and their impacts on businesses and daily lives, and they have historically been a feature of the Chinese and other migrant diasporas, both serving and exploiting a migrant community somewhat isolated from its mainstream host community. With limited information, it is difficult for us to gain an overall picture about the nature and functions of such organisations. Nonetheless, interviewees’ responses are clear enough for us to propose the following tentative assumptions:

- The activities of this kind of organisations cover all Chinese communities within the UK, but with different impacts. It seems that in big cities such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, such organisations are more active than in smaller cities or remote towns.
- It is difficult to generalise about the nature of these organisations as different groups have different types of activities, ranging from joint actions to protect the interests of group members to the monopolisation of

- some sectors, and even to criminal activities.
- There are some strict rules that group members have to follow, including a hierarchical system, with rewards and penalties
 - It is common for all organisations to request donations or a “protection fee” to maintain the organisation’s activities. Furthermore, the donations are not limited to group members but are also asked from the wider China community and businessmen.

With a focus on the themes of this project, in particular, much evidence from our survey indicates that the working conditions of migrant workers and the operation of labour brokerage in particular are bound up with the workings of these organisations. However, it is probably too early to draw any definitive conclusions on the relationship between working conditions and the influence of gang-type organisations. Nonetheless, evidence displayed in the following paragraphs may offer some insights into these topics.

Case 1: Who can protect us?

A: I am currently selling counterfeit DVDs and smuggled cigarettes. Everyday, I walk around the streets to meet customers. I get this illegal stuff from a Fujianese axe gang. Meanwhile I have to pay so called “protection fee” of around £20 a month.

Q: How do they protect you?

A: Nothing, the only thing they care about is to collect money for your site. Yes, £20 a month is not too much for me. But the number of illegal or undocumented migrant workers is big, so they can still make money from us. At the same time, you have to buy stuff from their place and then sell it on the street. If you bought from other places and they

found out, you would be in trouble. Meanwhile, I have been robbed many times. As for the white or Indian young men, it is better (when they attack you) as they just take away your bag. As for the Blacks, they are (uses racist term)... They not only take all your stuff, but they also beat you heavily. The robbers know I would not report them to the police. It is also impossible for me to get help from the local Chinese gang. The reason is simple. I am not a Fujianese. They only protect Fujianese. Every time, I have to endure everything that I have suffered. Late at night, I always feel helpless.

Q: Have you ever contacted the local Chinese community for help?

A: Well, I do not know where it is. Even if I know where to go, what kind of help will be offered to me? To protect me from the threat of local gangs and Chinese gangs, the only thing that I need to get is to confirm my political asylum seeker status. Once my status has been confirmed, I can work legally. It means that I will be protected by the law. However, it cannot be offered by the local Chinese community. Also, many of them within the Community are from Hong Kong. I am a Dongbeinese. I do not understand what they are talking about. Actually, I do not like them and do not trust southerners. Do you know what I am expecting now? I hope I can be caught by the police. I have just finished doing a community service sentence yesterday. This time, I was sentenced to 40 hours community services. Anyway, because I have no income to support my life, it is a paid job to clean the garden and keep the community tidy. To be honest, I would like to do this as my permanent job (Interview 16).

Case 2: My experience of running a massage parlour

I have been working all around the UK, such as in London China Town, Manchester, Liverpool and small towns around Brighton. I have worked in restaurants and other “special” businesses. In 2003-2004 I opened a massage parlour in a small southern seaside town near Brighton, which helped me to make around £1,000 per week and at the same time I still was working in takeaways nearby. Usually I went to my massage parlour once every week or every other week, I just went into it and spent 5 minutes to collect the cash and then left. The staff working in my massage parlour did not know I was the boss except for the “Mami”, who was from Malaysia; most of masseuses were from Dongbei and other Asian regions, and my business customer target was western males. It was different from my friend’s massage parlour, who was doing business with Chinese male migrants, and his masseuse had to be younger and more beautiful as Chinese male migrants are very selective; that is why when I saw young beautiful females with branded clothes and bags in London’s China Town, I could tell from their behaviour that 9 out of 10 were prostitutes.

Before I opened the business, my cousin told me if I cannot stay in, what I needed to do was to install CCTV to supervise, and also I have to say, in this career, everyone has to obey the rules to make proper money. I never paid any “protection fees” to anybody as I had a “Big Brother” looking after me, who is from Malaysia. Nobody dares to charge me protection fees. They are lucky that I don’t charge them protection fees. I did not use “Big Brother’s” power to do any bad things, except one time, when one of my former masseuses, from Dongbei and with her Dongbei boyfriend, opened another massage parlour close to mine in the same area... I asked my brother to close her business within 3 days, because she broke the unspoken business rule. She cannot set up in competition to other Chinese like that (Interview 14).

Case 3: Our approach to “Protection Fees”

Since our restaurant is quite new in this city, for a few years the business has been better than others. The local Fujianese, however, are quite disturbed. I will not tell you whether we pay protection fees to them. But I can say that most other local Chinese businesses will pay them money. For us, we have been here for many years. We have known and maintained good relationship with “inside” friends. We will call our friends who know the gangsters well when they are coming to collect the money. Normally, they will not force us to pay the money under such circumstances. But I will have to give them a discount when they eat in the restaurant. Sometimes, we will not ask them to pay the bill. Those guys understand that our business is a small business. Hence, they will not push us too much. (Interview 23)

Case 4: How can I protect my interests in a new place?

I moved to Bristol to operate my own takeaway. I bought it from a Hong Kong couple. They asked for £48K, telling me that the weekly turnover was £3K. I trusted them, but they lied to me. When I went to buy the necessary materials in Bristol, the other Chinese would ask me which takeaway I had bought. Once they knew which one I had taken and the price I had paid, they all laughed at me. Someone told me that this takeaway was only worth £18K. Everyone here knew the price. The Hong Kong couple had no way out but to sell it to someone who was new here. I got angry. But I still had a dream that the situation might get better under my management. The reality was harsh. I operated this take-away for 14 months, and the weekly turnover was only £1.6k. I have to pay one front desk worker £230 and one driver £160 a week. Then the weekly cost for utility bills and raw materials is another £1,000. I almost lost all the money

I have earned in the UK. I called the couple in to argue with them. They denied that they had lied to me. Also, they turned down my suggestion to buy the takeaway back at a price of £68K. I did not think that I had asked too much. This £68k is consisted by the original £48K and £20K in compensation because they cheated me. Obviously, there was no way to find a peaceful solution. Hence, they found a local gangster, George Hua, to mediate this dispute. When the gang member came to visit me, they told me that the couple had made a compromise to buy the take-away back at the original price of £48K. Honestly speaking, I was not afraid of them. I was alone here. I told them that I would chop the landlord's right hand off and burn down their house if I was forced to accept the deal. Then I would buy a one way ticket back to China. I believe that they would not dare to come to China to find me. The gang member passed my message back to the couple. I was sure that they would accept my offer, and they did. With this money, I left Bristol (Interview 25).

8.4 My experience with gang-masters

I came to the UK in 1998 via an arrangement with "snakeheads" and then looked for a job in decoration. I was lucky to find a job I was interested in. The employer was a Hong Kong gang-master who was recruiting for his decoration team. At that time, I rented a room in London but was travelling around the UK with the decoration team. Every week, I would receive £190 from the gang-master. Within several months, I turned out to be a skilled worker in the team. I knew how to deal with plumbing, electrical equipment installation, in-store decoration and gas supply and many other things. Then, my salary was increased to £300 a week. The Hong Kong boss and I cooperated very

well at that time. It was a so-called 'honey-moon' period.

But it did not last very long. As more and more illegal migrant workers rushed into the UK, London's China town was full of cheap labour wandering around. The Hong Kong gang-master soon realized that he could hire a newcomer to do the assistant job for around £120 a week while I was becoming very expensive. However, he was not willing to tell me frankly that he wanted to fire me because my salary was too high. Instead, he started to treat me much worse. One day, on a decoration site, he shouted at me: "Where were the damned window installation screws? Have you seen that, you son of a bitch?" When heard his words, I could not bear this any more. I said nothing but went back to the van in which all the stuff could be found. Soon I found a whole pack of window installation screws. I came to him and threw it heavily onto the ground in front of him. He was shocked. He had never imagined that I would dare to do this. I pointed at his nose, saying: "If you are not satisfied with me, all right, just tell me frankly. I will pack up and leave your site without any hesitation. There was no need to say something like that to me. F... you!"

Under such circumstances, it was hard for me to continue working with him. I stayed at home for several days. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong gang-master realized how important I was. I could do electrical jobs, painting, carpentry and so much else... He could not find others to replace my position. Hence, his wife, his sister and later himself called me and asked me to go out and have a talk over tea. In our tradition, if some one asks you to go and have tea with them, it means that they want to make an informal apology. However, it was impossible for us to be as harmonious as before. When a famous Chinese catering business group was recruiting repair workers, I was offered a position in

their group. I, together with other two colleagues, started work at 10 in the morning. We would check the note book at the reception desk in the headquarters restaurant. They would write down what kind of damage had been reported by which restaurant. Then we would drive our van to solve the problem. Normally, all the repair work could be done very quickly. The remaining time was our free time. Also, my salary has been raised to £500 per week. It was really comfortable.

However, this group had a deep relationship with a famous Hong Kong triad organization. Most employers in the group were members. I had very good relationship with these triad members even though I was not in the organization. Many outsiders knew my relationship with this triad organization. Actually, I do not want to clarify my relationship with them because such a relationship has helped me to ensure that no other local gang member disturbs my business. I stayed in this Chinese catering group for 4 years until the Big Brother's son came to work in the group. He was young and crazy at that time. As the heir-apparent of this group, this young man needed to cultivate his own trusted aides. His people had been planted in many key positions and departments. Our repair team was not an exception either. Soon two other persons were assigned to our team. These guys were not capable people. They could not handle and solve problems properly. At the same, they thought they were being loyal to the future new boss. Hence, they did not like us who worked for the current boss. As a result, arguments, quarrels, and sometimes even fights became part of our daily life. Those comfortable days never came back. They were real mafia organization members. I was not sure how bad things would get. Anyway, I was not in the organization. I wanted to quit. I sent my resignation letter to the boss. Considering my excellent performance, the boss tried to persuade me to stay

in the group. I told them the reality in my team. They kept silent. They were all the mafia organization members. As the old Chinese saying goes: every new sovereign brings his own courtiers. It was time for me to leave this place (Interview 26).

8.5 Respondents' views on official policies and support mechanisms

With the aim of improving the working and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers, we asked interviewees whether they could offer any comments and suggestions on these matters. In relation to the London event “Strangers to Citizens” on 4 May 2009, many respondents expressed their opinions about this event directly, while others considered broadly the UK migration management system and policy recommendations to help migrants. Amongst the number of comments and suggestions, six quotes have been selected and highlighted as follows:

Case 1: Regularisation of irregular migrants please!

Q: If you are given a chance to express your needs to the British government, what would you want to say?

A: I am almost numb after working here many years. But recently I feel very homesick, day and night. I really want to go back to visit my parents, who are older than before. I felt guilty as my brother and I have been in Britain for over 10 years. As I am a father of my own children, I can imagine their feelings, so if I can have a chance, I would say to the British government: let us work here legally, as we have paid tax for many years, and we don't want to work illegally. Recently one of my friends who is holding a refugee ID card was arrested as they said he is not supposed to work, but on his refugee ID card it shows

that he is allowed to work, so how can they explain that to us? The British government cannot say yes to us today and say no to us tomorrow, as it is unfair to us. We have contributed a lot to British society, why cannot the British government follow what the Spanish government has done? Several of my friends in Spain got their citizenship, and after that they can work legally and then they can pay tax to Spanish Government which is good for both sides. Now some of my refugee friends have had to stop work, they just go to the casino to gamble every day (Interview 14).

Case 2: I have no choice but to recruit irregular migrants

Q: What is your opinion on the regularisation of irregular migrants in UK?

A: I think it should have been done earlier. Who allowed them to enter this country? It was not me. They are available here already, and I have to employ some staff to run my business. It is ridiculous for me to apply for work permits for some employees from mainland China and pay them to work in my “tiny” takeaway, as I cannot afford the cost. Also I heard when the owner wants to apply for a work permit for his chefs, the minimum annual salary has to be £20,000 per year. How can I afford that and make a profit based on this in this small shop? Once I heard from one of my friends that when the police arrested the Fujianese irregular migrant workers in his shop, they then got the fine from my friend and released the Fujianese irregular workers. They said he can keep giving food and accommodation as the owner to the Fujian irregular workers, but he cannot be allowed to hire them to work for him. Can you imagine that? How ridiculous it is! As an owner of the takeaway, we ourselves work hard every day to make a living. We are not a charity organisation. How

can we afford this and why should we? I don't think training local people to be chefs for Chinese takeaways is a good idea in the short term, as even I can't differentiate between the 15 kinds of sauces, although I have run the takeaway for 5 years, and so I think it is not easy to train local people to be chefs in Chinese catering to sort out the labour shortage (Interview 32).

Case 3: The strict migration policy has made us even more vulnerable

I hope that the British government can recognise our undocumented workers' contribution. Our Chinese are enduring and hard-working. Nobody wants to do illegal jobs. For me, I am an asylum seeker. According to the law, it is illegal for me to work during the application process. At the same time, I have to support myself. Since I cannot find a legal job via legal channels, I have to work in the shadows. I have to take risks to do illegal business and illegal jobs. The stricter the immigration regulations are, the deeper we get involved in illegal businesses. We had to find a gang-master with a triad background to make our living. Hence, I hope the Home Office can grant us legal status. We Chinese are not like many other races in the UK. We live through our manual labour rather than with the government's support. With legal status, your government can find out that we Chinese are paying tax to your British government, doing hard jobs that your people will not want to do. Overall, we Chinese are making a positive contribution to your society (Interview 16).

Case 4: Rethinking the work-permit scheme

Q: In the case of some Chinese doctors going back to China early, was it because they did not want to suffer labour abuse any more or there were other reasons?

A: Avoiding suffering is one thing; on the other hand, the Home Office which manages migrant labour has an established policy. It says migrant labour has to find a job in the 28 days between departure from the previous workplace to employment in the next workplace. It is such a short time and we have no more time and choice but to accept low-paying offers.

Q: Usually, there is a need of at least 2-3 months for people to search for a job. Do you think the employment situation may get better if you are allowed a longer period to select an employer?

A: Right. If we were entitled 3 months to find a job, it would make things better. The employers are very well aware of the short period of 'rush-employment' policy. They know in a limited time, we are not able to find a better place. Indeed, we cannot find a better place in 28 days. So they exploit us however they want to. Female doctors are even in a less secure situation. The employers often harass them. They are powerless against their employers and lack the confidence to handle the situation. They have to do whatever the bosses ask them to do (Interview 18).

Case 5: Different perspectives on the regularisation of irregular migrants

My thoughts might be different from other Chinese business owners. Take the "strangers into citizens" as an example, the other Chinese business owners might think this event is good to help them to get cheaper labour and reduce their business cost. I disagree with them, and I do not think the conditional working permits for illegal workers will be an effective solution. I should say that the term "Fujianese" can not be used to address the whole Fujianese group. Although I came from Xiamen, in the south of Fujian Province, it is

quite different from the Fuqingers from north Fujian. I knew some Fuqingers who endured severe hardship to come to work here. But they would rather work their hardest and wash dishes in the kitchen for 10 years in the UK than try to learn English and communicate with the local people and be socially integrated. Fuqingers are working very hard here for the lowest pay in Britain, but, when you go back to visit their hometown, you will find out they have all transferred lots of money to build big and luxurious houses there. Generation after generation, this is a tradition. When you are a young guy around 20 years old, you have to go abroad legally or illegally, or you will be discriminated against by your fellow citizens, who will say you are “mei ben shi” (have no ability). Although the Chinese and British governments try to stop these illegal migrants coming every year, Fuqingers still come one by one. They have little education at home, and they have an emigration tradition... As one teenager said: “I do not need to go to school to study, when I grow up, I will go abroad to be an overseas illegal worker”. I think it can be called a “regional culture atmosphere”. I think if one wants to help these Fuqingers to get legal status in Britain, by letting them get legal status through offering work permits, it will give the Fuqingers who are still at home in China an even stronger desire to come illegally. So I think Fuqingers should be given a basic education, go to college and find a job in China, and not come to Britain illegally. Therefore, I think the best solution should be to let the Chinese government educate them and give them work-related skills training (Interview 11).

Case 6: A national helpline for Chinese migrant workers?

Q: Do you have any suggestions to government or policy makers?

A: Can the government set up a special place for Chinese

migrants to make enquiries, such as a Hotline, no matter whether you are legal or illegal, so that if you have any enquiry, you can call the Hotline to ask for help? We can set up hotlines in different places to answer Chinese migrants' enquiries, and if the enquiries cannot be answered directly, they can be written down in a notebook and then experts can be asked to reply. Meanwhile, we can follow the model of having a social-worker system to help to solve Chinese migrants' psychological and mental problems. As far as I know many migrant workers have travelled a long way to Britain to work here, leaving their old parents, wives and husbands and children at home in China. They must feel very lonely, and have problems, such as homesickness, and whether they can get used to their new environment and live harmoniously with their colleagues. Whether from the physical or psychological aspect, they do not have any way to allow them to release their pent-up emotions (Interview 5).

9 Conclusions and policy recommendations

This research project has reviewed the employment, mobility, working and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers in one particular region of the United Kingdom, in a particular context of recent economic recession and also the stricter application of laws and policies on migration and asylum. Due to time constraints and the limited geographical spread of the fieldwork, the report cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the Chinese ethnic economy across the UK. The findings may indeed not reflect the situation in the largest cities, such as London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow, which are major centres of economic activity and of the UK Chinese population. Taking Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands

region as a case study, nonetheless, this project has offered a good opportunity to observe the real work and lives of Chinese migrants in peripheral regions of the UK, and the trend and scope of the changes in the Chinese ethnic economy. In cases where respondents have referred to their previous experience in other parts of the country, it may also help shed light on the employment and living conditions of Chinese migrant workers nationwide. Some preliminary conclusions can be presented as follows.

First, many features of the Chinese ethnic economy in the UK have been influenced by the economic recession. Examples are: a decline in local consumption of ethnic products such as Chinese foods, TCM, and other small commodities; the decline in subcontracting to Chinese companies (e.g. in construction and decoration) or to “Gang-master” labour brokers in agriculture and food processing; the growth of demand from Chinese communities including for high-quality Chinese food, child-minding and student services; and the emergence of new Chinese entrepreneurs from Fujian, Dongbei and other regions of China, meaning that the previous dominance of the catering trade by Hong Kong and Overseas Chinese has now given way to that of these new entrepreneurs.

Second, there has been a decline in irregular Chinese migration to the UK through smuggling agents, and also an increase in the flow of irregular migrant workers returning to China. This can be explained by many factors, including: increased opportunities for regular migration; stricter measures against irregular migration; difficulty in finding work in the UK labour market; exchange rate fluctuations which have made the income levels available in the UK less attractive to Chinese migrants; and changes both in the demographic profile of potential migrants and in their perceptions about the desirability of migration. However, on the basis of the limited information available, it is difficult either to

give a precise estimation of the scale of these changes or to predict future trends as the recession ends and the economy picks up. It seems unlikely, however, that the era of exchange rates of 14, 15 or even 16 yuan to the pound will return, and this was a major factor in attracting Chinese migrant workers to the UK in the late 1990s and 2000s.

Third, there is a severe shortage of qualified Chinese migrant workers in the Chinese catering sector. As a larger number of irregular migrants leave the UK, the growing supply of persons on various kinds of student visa has so far proved inadequate to fill the labour shortage in this sector.

Fourth, the economic recession has brought about a deterioration in the working conditions for all Chinese migrant workers, with a particularly severe impact on certain sectors and groups. Not only irregular migrant workers have been affected. Coerced or bonded labour was also identified as a serious issue amongst many doctors of Chinese medicine and skilled chefs who hold work permits but are nevertheless vulnerable to labour exploitation and abuse.

Fifth, bonded labour and labour exploitation of regular Chinese migrant workers cannot be attributed merely to the bad practice of individual employers. Related factors are deficiencies in the systems of labour recruitment and contracting in both the UK and China. Moreover, divisions within Chinese communities along lines of skill level, region of origin, and migration experience, together with a lack of mutual understanding and respect between different community segments, have served to hamper overall community integration.

Finally, tackling the novel forms of coerced or bonded labour and labour exploitation highlighted in the report calls for a broad understanding and a common methodological approach

to Chinese communities and their transitions in the UK. In this regard, this project has been treated as a pilot study to identify key issues and the scope of the research; develop several hypotheses; and test the feasibility of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for a large-scale survey which could subsequently be applied nationwide.

Given the linkages between the employment and working conditions of Chinese migrants, the development of the Chinese ethnic economy, and the transformation of Chinese communities in the UK, a number of policy recommendation can be drawn from this report.

- 1 Regular roundtable meetings of all stakeholders would be helpful to address the key issues or bottlenecks in Chinese community development and the lack of communication and interaction between different Chinese groups and between the Chinese community and mainstream society in the UK. These would be particularly beneficial for bringing all the needs and the voices of Chinese migrant workers, most of which are presently hidden, to the surface. Such meetings should be held on a regular and at least annual basis in order to: review the key issues and latest developments in the Chinese ethnic economy, labour market and labour standards; develop new ideas and approaches on the above issues; and explore constructive solutions. The stakeholders should include, but not be limited to, UK government agencies, Chinese government representatives, Chinese ethnic entrepreneurs, Chinese community organisations, other civil society organisations, and trade unions, as well as academic researchers.
- 2 As the vast majority of Chinese migrant workers have poor English, the Chinese-language media (including

local newspapers, internet and TV channels) should take more social responsibility for: protecting migrant workers by providing more knowledge of their legal rights, background information, and examples of successful cases; commissioning special columns for scholars to analyse development issues relevant to the UK Chinese community; and reporting the voices, views and requests of migrant workers with regard to their work and livelihood.. Rights advice could be provided on the websites of the Chinese embassy and consulates in the UK, in the form of FAQs, although for undocumented migrants, it would be more appropriate to have a site hosted by an NGO or an academic institution. In addition, some migrant workers were aware of free English classes available in the area, but these clashed with working hours. Providers of language classes should be encouraged to offer e.g. early-morning time slots, accessible to workers in the catering industry.

- 3 It would be helpful for UK Chinese community development to identify several “model Chinese communities” nationwide as examples of communities which are not dominated by narrow sectoral or regional interests, but which have something to offer to all ethnic Chinese in their area. For this purpose, a pilot study is recommended, followed by a one-day workshop for Chinese community leaders, scholars, journalists and local-authority representatives. One of its tasks would be to identify and prioritise needs and projects for Chinese community development.
- 4 The creation of a Chinese community development foundation is recommended, which should be jointly funded by UK central and local authorities, Chinese entrepreneurs/companies, and, if possible, Chinese

consular officials, and managed by all stakeholders. This could help different Chinese groups and organisations to work together toward community cohesion, mutual interests and long term development perspective. It could be starting from the model Chinese communities and their project proposals.

- 5 Given the serious shortage of catering labour and urgent need to regularize the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) sector, it is recommended that two national research projects should be prepared involving collaboration between businesspeople in the sector, Chinese community leaders and academic scholars, to explore issues affecting these industries in greater depth and make industry-specific policy proposals.
- 6 Based on our informants' responses, the best way to reduce irregularity in the catering sector would be to facilitate the employment of regular migrants, by adjusting the points-based system to take account of e.g. years of work experience and/or experience in a cooking school in China as markers of skilled status, in place of salary, formal academic or vocational qualifications which few chefs have, We recognize the political difficulty of making an exception for a category of migrants, but the situation in the Chinese catering sector is genuinely exceptional. In the longer term making training in Chinese catering available in the UK would reduce demand for irregular labour. Allowing regular migrants a longer period of grace in which to change jobs (at least double the present 28 days) would also make regular status more attractive and less subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers.
- 7 It is recommended to establish a UK Chinese University Student Volunteering Support Network under the UKSSA

to provide services and support to meet the most urgent needs of Chinese migrant workers, particularly help for non-English speakers in accessing sources of social and workplace support, legal and immigration advice etc. This would also be a good opportunity for Chinese students to become more engaged with society and gain working experience beyond the university. It should be jointly funded by the Chinese Embassy and the UK government as well as university authorities. A working plan and feasibility study is needed. There are similar schemes in China organizing student volunteers to assist with education and other community projects in migrant communities which do not have access to regular urban services; and these could provide a model for some UK pilot schemes. With academic and community assistance, students could offer both drop-in advice clinics for e.g. translation of English-language contracts, and help run a moderated, bilingual wiki site for FAQs on employment rights and migration status.

- 8 Toward sustainable research, development and collaboration on Chinese migration and community development in the UK, it is recommended to establish a working group to coordinate and steer the above projects. The China Policy Institute of the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies would like to provide administrative support for this, building on the links already made with stakeholders within and outside the UK Chinese community.

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List of Interviewer Questions

I. Personal Profiles

- Age: Gender: Home region in China:
- Married: if yes, any children?
- Year you left China:
- How many countries have you stayed in?
- Year of entry to UK:
- Immigration status:

II. Migration motivation

- What did you do before international migration? Why did you want to leave China? What was the most important factor driving you to leave China?
- Generally, are you happy about your migration experiences? Why? What kind of experiences did you have? If you have been to more than one country, which country is more interesting to you, and which is not, why?
- Why did you select UK as the destination of international migration? What aims or objectives were in your mind, and why? How do you assess your experience? If you had the choice, would you select international migration, or UK, again? Why?
- How did you account for benefits and costs (including risks) of the migration? What are the differences between your plan/imagination and the reality in UK (explain in details)? Do you regret your decision or not, and why?

III. Job mobility

- So far, how many jobs have you done since you arrived UK? Would you mind talking about the details of each job (location, nature, working conditions, reason to leave)?

- Why did you often change jobs? What were major factors driving you to change jobs and locations in the past?
- Generally, is it easy or difficult to find a job in UK? Why and what factors influence job hunting? Compared with last year or last five years, have you see any changes in job market in the last one or two years? What are impacts on yourself or your friends?
- How did you find a new job? Which major channels (friends, home mates, labour brokers, newspapers) did you use? Do you have any preference (e.g. sector, wage, region of owner)?
- Have you or your friends had experience of unemployment in UK? If so when, how long and what effect did it have? And why?

VI. Working conditions

- Amongst many working experiences you mentioned, which one is the best in terms of working conditions and pay, and why? Could you give a detailed explanation?
- So far, what is the worst experience since you migrated into UK? Could you give me one or two examples about poor working conditions?
- On average, how many hours do you work each day? How many days each week or month? Normally, how many days off have you taken each year? What is an ideal working pattern in your mind? Can you negotiate about working pattern with the boss? Why?
- Have you experienced any dangerous or unsafe job since you arrived in the UK? Could you provide details of the event? What factors led to the dangerous situation? And what lesson have you learnt from that event?
- Having been in the UK many years, what is your idea of a good or bad job? What are the criteria (indicators) in your mind? How do you trade off between salary and

other conditions such as safety, working hours, and so on?

- Compared with your friends, is your situation better or worse, and why? What are the major factors responsible for it?
- Compared with five years or one year ago, in your opinion, has the situation improved or worsened? Why?

V. Working relations and friendship

- How are working relationships in your current workplace? Having been in many workplaces in UK, which ones do you have good memories of and which ones bad, and why?
- Are working relationships important for you to keep or leave a job? What factors are important to keep a good working relationship, and why?
- How many friends did you make since you arrived in the UK? Who are they and where are they from? How did you meet and how often do you contact each other?
- How important are your friends for your survival and development in UK? Would you mind sharing one or two stories about how they help each other?

VI. Chinese community organisations and impacts

- Since you arrived in the UK, have you seen any changes in the Chinese community, such as job opportunities in Chinese ethnic business, relationships between Cantonese, Fujianese, Dongbeinese and other regions of origin? Do you have friends from different regions?
- What are the major issues within Chinese community? And what differences between Nottinghamshire or East Midland region and other regions of UK?
- Have you found any discrimination in the workplace or

the Chinese community? If so, could you give some examples and explain how, why and what were main factors contributing to it? And what consequences or by what methods the event was sorted out?

- Personally, have you had any experience of discrimination or bullying by other Chinese? If so, could you give details what happened and how you coped with?
- Do you know any Chinese community organisations in this region or in the UK generally? Have you contacted with or gained any help from these organisations? What kind of help do you need from the Chinese community organisations, and why?

VII. Adaptation to British Society

- How is your English competency? How important are English skills for you to live and work in the UK? What effort have you made in improving your English? If possible, are you willing to take some time and even spend your pocket money to improve your English? And why?
- Have you experienced working for a non-Chinese employer? If so, who were they and what kind of work experience did you have? What are the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese owners in terms of working conditions, pay and management styles?
- If you had a choice between Chinese and other employers, which one would you prefer to work with, and why?
- Having been in the UK for many years, what is your comment on British society? What have you learnt from here and what don't you like?
- Have you been discriminated against or experienced racism here? And what strategies do you take to cope

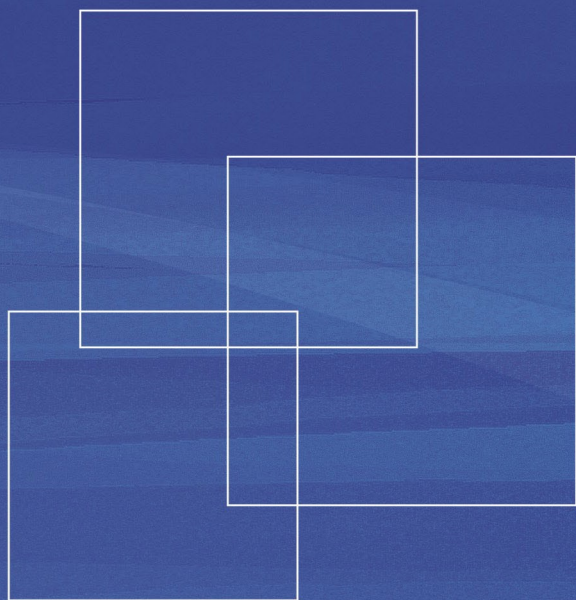
with the challenges?

VIII. Regularisation of illegal migrant workers

- What are the differences between legal and irregular migrant workers in terms of job search and working conditions? Could you give one or two examples of how irregular migrant workers fare in terms of job opportunities, working conditions and pay, health and safety, etc?
- As there is an on-going debate on the regularisation of irregular migrant workers including Chinese irregular migrant workers in UK, what is your opinion on this matter? Do you agree or disagree with the regularisation, and why?
- In your opinion, what benefits can Chinese and English communities gain if the regularisation takes place in UK? What negative impacts or potential damage could there be if all irregular migrant workers are entitled in legal status?
- If you have irregular status, what benefits could you gain from regularisation? And what most important action is it likely you will take? Would you like to stay here forever, and why? If the regularisation movement failed, do you have any plan to return to China or transfer to other country in the near future? If yes, what are major factors behind the decision? What are the key conditions which determine whether you take action? Why?

IX. Special time, family and sexual relationship

- How do you spend your personal time? Do you often drink or meet friends locally or nation-wide? Do you often go to Casinos? What is your opinion on how others spend their time?



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE FOR CHINA
AND MONGOLIA**

**1-10 Tayuan Diplomatic Office Building
No. 14 Liangmahe Nanlu,
Beijing 100600
P.R of China**

Tel: 010-65325091

Fax: 010-65321420

